



FEDERATION OF ASSOCIATIONS OF FORMER INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SERVANTS  
FÉDÉRATION DES ASSOCIATIONS DES ANCIENS FONCTIONNAIRES INTERNATIONAUX  
FEDERACION DE ASOCIACIONES DE EX-FUNCIONARIOS INTERNACIONALES

**Fifty-fourth session of the FAFICS Council  
22-25 July 2024  
Bangkok**

**Council 54/2024/D.6**

**REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT**

*Introduction and Overview*

1. Good morning and thank you for your support during the year that is now ending. As a general introduction, I would like to say that it has been a busy year. Your Bureau and I have been busy implementing the decisions you made last year and strengthening the Committees. Meeting almost monthly, the pace has been faster than before for the Bureau and the Committees. The Bureau met monthly, although one of the meetings was hybrid with many of us meeting in Geneva for the first time in many years. I hope to continue having one hybrid meeting annually. Such meetings build teams and further understanding of the work and challenges. On a positive note, voices of dissent from outside FAFICS were quieter.
2. I particularly welcomed working with the Bureau. We worked well together. You have a strong team that cooperatively is moving FAFICS forward. I thank all of them for their skill and dedication.
3. As your President, I have tried to be present and transparent to all of you and with all my efforts on your behalf. I have issued several letters and have, via video and in person, given opening statements at some annual meetings and pre-retirement seminars of Associations. I welcome feedback on my efforts.
4. After the first year of my tenure, which I might characterize as a transition year, focusing on implementing the tenets and spirit of the new Rules of Procedure, I feel that the previous twelve months have been focused on production – on handling the topics in our work plan and challenges that arose during the year. You have strong Standing Committees working on Pension and After-Service Health Insurance issues. I'll mention details in a moment, and of course we have significant time dedicated to these issues during the coming days.
5. The Bureau Committees for Communications and for Membership have worked diligently this year, and you will see the results later in this Council. I fully support the idea of making these two groups into Council Standing Committees. Such a change will ensure that the topics stay on our agenda and will open opportunities for members of even more Associations to contribute to the work that benefits not only FAFICS but also the more than 84,000 former international civil servants. Please note that the term denotes all former UN system staff, whether recruited as international, national or

locally recruited staff.

6. Taken together, we have over 30 people from 18 Member Associations participating in the work of FAFICS. I am proud of every one of them. They make great teams. There could be more. Without them, I would not be very effective and our advocacy would not be as prominent and competent. My thanks to all.
7. I am still the President of ARICSA. I feel that I have done a good job of separating my ARICSA duties from the FAFICS duties, although perhaps ARICSA again got the shorter end of the stick this year. I have not yet decided whether I will again run for ARICSA President again in October 2025. – it will be good if a few experienced people remain in the ARICSA Executive Committee. I will keep you informed.

### *Budget and Travel*

8. A word about the budget proposal in front of the Council. You will note that, as in the past, travel expenses represent a significant portion of the budget. I am convinced that some travel is essential. Even while making use of virtual technologies, physical meetings help build teams and create enthusiasm for projects. We will continue to be mindful of the reality of the climate crisis, and the belt-tightening across the UN system. We will continue to maximize the use of technology and be judicious about how often we travel. Nevertheless, some travel is essential.
9. Some of the travel envisaged is to support Associations to attend the annual Council sessions. Attendance can not only facilitate discussions, but improves the cohesion of our member associations, making the Federation stronger. Attendance can also further personal friendships and improve skills exchange. The Bureau agreed that subsidies for travel needed to be increased. Travel costs have increased. You will find the new travel support levels in the proposed Budget.
10. Some selective travel by Bureau members on FAFICS business to a group either establishing or re-activating an Association can be a powerful force towards making that group an active Association. You see the results of such work in front of you today – two new Associations eager to join FAFICS. Travel to conferences where retiree matters are discussed can ensure that our interests are not sidelined. I am also recommending that a physical Bureau meeting be held annually if possible – we can work efficiently in a dedicated environment and build personal relationships, i.e. improve our functioning as a team.
11. You were informed last year that, although since 2013 the Fund has funded the travel of four FAFICS delegates to the Pension Board, the Pension Board decided only to fund two delegates from FAFICS. I continue to feel strongly that it is important to have our full FAFICS delegation of four attending the Pension Board, especially since we have different expertise sets. We raised the question of funding at the Pension Board last year without success, and this year again – in a time of financial stress and belt-tightening in the UN system – only two FAFICS delegates will be funded. Other travelers will continue to require funding by FAFICS. We will continue to ask the Pension Fund to include travel for the complete delegation in its budget proposal.
12. During this Council, you will have time to discuss, and, I hope, approve the proposals that have come from your Treasurer and your FAFICS Bureau.

### *Communications*

13. I have tried to keep you informed of FAFICS matters through presidential newsletters. I write them when inspired by events. I would appreciate your feedback.
14. Last year, the Council approved a Communications Strategy, and the Communications Working Group has been working hard to implement that strategy. This year they have produced a FAFICS brochure that provides an overview of our purpose and activities. We have issued a press release about this Council. We have started using a Google Group to send emails to all Associations.
15. Concerning the web site, a prototype web site has been developed. We will launch the new web site during this Council. Technically, it is ready to go, and existing content has been transferred. We will need procedures and a content administrator to ensure that the site remains lively and user-friendly and useful. More on this topic later.

### *The Work of the Bureau*

16. I said last year that, in my opinion, we had started working according to our Rules and our principles. First, let me say that the energy of our Bureau members has been simply fantastic. I am impressed and grateful. The Bureau has met monthly, and we have published the minutes and, as appropriate, I have commented in my Newsletters. I have endeavored to ensure that my actions are clear and transparent. Not every communication can be shared with all Member Associations, of course. Our Council reports are now public and more efforts have been made to translate them into French and Spanish where feasible. In addition, we have tried to provide summaries in French and Spanish for important Council documents.
17. The Expertise Pool has been established and is very useful in identifying people willing and skilled to support the work of FAFICS. All representatives of FAFICS who are not elected, namely all my recommendations for Pension Board delegates and representatives to Pension Board subsidiary bodies, have come from the Expertise Pool.
18. Please encourage your members to consider submitting their names. We need more individuals with knowledge and experience on pension, health insurance, human resource management, ethics, communication, website, IT, budget finance, and treasury issues. I am once again urging all Associations to continue to encourage submissions so that FAFICS can access the incredible talent in our Federation around the world as needed.
19. The Bureau has performed the duties outlined in the Rules of Procedure. It drew up and implemented a work programme and a monitoring tool to keep track of implementation of the Bureau work programme was developed. I have continued to work in close collaboration with Bureau members, and all proposals and communications have been reviewed and approved together with the Bureau. We have been a close and dedicated team of self-motivated people, which have supported me – but more importantly have supported you.
20. The Bureau and I have done all we could to ensure that this and future Council sessions are prepared and run according to the new Rules, including timelines for sending out documents prior to the Council. In addition, there are efforts to improve the document preparation times (as far as possible), the hybrid nature of the meeting (although the meeting remains primarily a physical meeting), the electronic voting where necessary and for two-year terms, the increased consultation between the Bureau and myself, including a review of my report. The report of last year's Council took longer than the

Rules prescribed, but we will be working to meet the deadline this year.

21. All in all, I feel that the Bureau and I have done a good job at incorporating the new Rules into our *modus operandi*.

#### *After Service Health Insurance Matters*

22. The Standing Committee on After-Service Health Insurance and Long-term Care (SC-ASHIL) has been very active. You have a report and opportunity for discussion later in this meeting.
23. From my side, let me only add that the issue of funding the after-service health insurance subsidies has not disappeared. Indeed, I hear mutterings and have seen a report that use the words 'financial burden' when referring to UN system retirees. Receiving health insurance that we have paid into over our active years is not a burden. We will remain vigilant and will need a strong and active Standing Committee to advocate for these issues.
24. Cost and coverage issues have also arisen in locations with high inflation, especially locations where retirees need to travel to other countries for the required care. These points are on our agenda and will continue to be discussed.

#### *Pension Matters*

25. With regard to the Standing Committee on Pension Issues, the Council had agreed that the Core Group that would meet throughout the year would be the FAFICS pension delegation. It was also agreed that the Core Group would include individuals from the Expertise Pool to facilitate capacity-building, knowledge-sharing and succession planning. We need more people in the Expertise Pool. One source of skill is the retiree representatives on your former organization's Staff Pension Committee. If you have no retiree representative on your local SPC, you should. Rule C.1 stipulates that "*two UNJSPF retiree representatives shall be entitled to attend meetings of the SPC.*"
26. Concerning Pension Issues, the news is good. The good news is that pension administration continues to improve, and investments have passed the 2021 peak. Along with the required reliability of payments – no payments have been missed – the quality of service keeps improving. Telephone calls are now answered within one minute. Queries through the 'contact us' web page are responded to within one day, unless the situation is too complicated. The Geneva office is working well. Initiatives are underway to further improve "customer service", i.e. service to the retirees, to active staff, and to organization. Dedicated "help sessions" have been organized to support retirees wishing to use the Digital Certificate of Entitlement.
27. I would like to mention that we are meeting here in Bangkok today partly because the Pension Fund is celebrating its Bangkok Liaison Office. The communications initiatives of the Fund are important and worthy. In addition to Liaison Offices, the leadership of the Fund has been actively holding town hall meetings and briefing organizations and retiree associations in person. This 'close contact' is very useful, and we hope it will continue. We can also envision further Liaison Offices in regional centers, such as Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and/or Santiago, Chile.
28. There are several documents for discussion later in this Council session and we will hear from Ms. Rosemarie McClean the Chief Executive for Pension Administration and from

Mr. Pedro Guazo, the Representative of the Secretary General for pension fund investments on Thursday – Rosemarie in person and Pedro virtually, since he only arrives in Bangkok on Sunday.

29. The Pension Board now meets three times annually – in February and April virtually and in July physically. After this meeting, the FAFICS delegates, including me as head of the delegation, will participate in next week's Pension Board. In addition to Theresa Panuccio, Suzanne Bishopric and myself in person, Gerhard Schramek will participate virtually, as well as our alternate delegates Marlene Ardou and Vladimir Yossifov.
30. Theresa Panuccio and I have been busy as your delegates on the Pension Board's Succession Planning and Evaluation Committee, preparing the papers for advertising for a new Deputy Chief Executive of Pension Administration. We also serve on the Pension Board's Standing Committee, reviewing the Chief Executive's decisions in appeals cases.
31. Key issues this past year that FAFICS has carefully followed and advocated for are:
  - a. Eliminating the 0.5% decrease in the first cost-of-living increase;
  - b. Improving small pensions;
  - c. Following the improvements in retiree services that have occurred and are planned through new software and frequently reminding the Pension Fund that there are beneficiaries without computers or smart phones;
  - d. Looking at measures to reduce investment risk.
32. We are also supporting other issues, such as a simplification of the rule of acknowledging surviving spouse benefits. The July meeting of the Pension Board, which will be held in Bangkok, Thailand, will have some of these issues on its agenda. However, their support by the Board, and ultimately by the UN General Assembly will depend on the view of the future economic situation of the Fund, as judged by the Actuaries. With the current financial crisis in the UN, it may be difficult to get approval for any measure that increases costs in the future.
33. That being said, we are very pleased with the developments, especially in the Pension Administration's work and on the increase in the investment portfolio after the recent dip. We are also very pleased to have supported a second term for Rosemarie McClean as CEPA and are pleased that she has accepted.
34. One of the major issues during the last year has been the increasing numbers of countries excluded from the Two-track Option. Over half the world's countries will be excluded as of November, thus removing those beneficiaries from the purchasing power protection based on the local cost of living. It is very clear in the Pension Fund's Rules that the authority to suspend the two-track option lies with the Chief Executive of Pension Administration. Even the Pension Board has no authority to intervene. Our approaches to the Pension Administration have not resulted in any change, and we will therefore be preparing a paper for the April Pension Board meeting in 2025. We are willing to work with the Pension Administration closely on this issue.
35. I would like to make special mention of three Pension Board Committees that have met many times during the previous year. The Fund Solvency and Asset and Liability Monitoring Committee (FSALM) has met over a dozen times, always with expert contributions from Suzanne Bishopric and Marashetty Seenappa on behalf of FAFICS. The Plan Review Group has met several times and is presenting its report on Rule simplifications at next week's Pension Board. Gerhard Schramek and Suzanne Bishopric

represent us on this Group. Our priority has been to promote the elimination of the final 0.5% reduction in the first cost-of-living increase. However, this and other recommendations may be difficult to reach approval of the General Assembly due to financial constraints. We also advocated for an update to the Small Pensions, and a good paper has been prepared by the Pension Administration, for approval next week. We offered to work together with the Pension Administration on the preparation of this paper, but our offer was never taken up. Finally, I would like to mention that Marco Breschi has finished his term on the Audit Committee. I am simply saying 'thank you' for their diligent and expert work on our behalf.

36. Others have been busy on other Pension Board committees and working groups. You can find the details in the separate Succession Planning proposals document that I have provided. I am committed to ensuring we plan for succession, drawing on the Expertise Pool and ensuring full transparency of the process, in compliance with our Rules of Procedure.

### *Elections and Succession Planning*

37. I appreciate the service that each of our elected and appointed officials provides on behalf of the Federation, above and beyond that which he or she provides to a local Association. This year, we have three Vice-Presidents who have finished their terms. We have four candidates for these three positions, so there will be an election, held electronically – for both those present and those connecting remotely. We will formalize the elections later in this meeting.
38. I want to thank Vice-President Debbie Landey for her leadership and dedicated service over the previous four years. I would also like to thank those who had to step down from committees during the year, Marco Breschi for his detailed work on the Pension Board Audit Committee, Carlos Tejada and Kumiko Matsuura-Mueller on the Pension Board Budget Committee. Whether Vice-Presidents Tony Casas or Marashetty Seenappa step down will depend upon the election results, but in any case I need to thank them for their leadership roles during the past two years.
39. During the past year, I have tried to be transparent in my nominations, and have looked for talent where possible. Rule 5.8 states that [Standing Committees and Working Groups] shall be expressly charged with inducting new expertise with a view to planning and managing succession. I have been very gratified to see the Core Group established for the ASHIL Standing Committee. For the Standing Committee on Pension Issues, its Chair Suzanne Bishopric and I have ensured that our two alternate delegates to the Pension Board are informed of all the issues. As I said earlier, expanding the Pension Issues "Core Group" to include more talent in the coming year will help ensure quality support and succession.

### *Member Associations*

40. The Bureau Ad-hoc Committee on Membership, namely Marashetty Seenappa and Abdou Khader Diakhate, have been very busy this year. You see some of the results in front of you – two new Member Associations, from UPU and from Cote d'Ivoire, with a new more possible member associations being prepared. This Committee needs to have

its standing upgraded to a Council Standing Committee and a wider core team established.

### Standing Committees

41. Speaking of Standing Committees, you may ask why Standing Committees are needed. My answer is two-fold. First, creating a Standing Committee is a mark by the Council that the topic is important and lasting. Standing Committees support the primary “pillars” of our work. You, the Council, have decided that the topics addressed in each committee is something that you want to drive forward. The topics addressed are ones you want to see discussed at Council meetings.
42. Secondly, a Standing Committee is not just a few people. A Standing Committee is a vehicle for involving people from many Member Associations, each of them with skills. It is a vehicle for discussion and action throughout the year. It is a means of building skills for succession. I hope that each Standing Committee will encourage retirees from several associations to play an active part in the work of FAFICS.

### Council Preparation

43. Before finishing this report, I really need to thank Delia Barcelona for all the advance work to set up this Council meeting. There has been a tremendous amount of background work, requiring coordination between Delia, ESCAP, AFICS-Thailand, and also including an assistant to help format documents and help us meet deadlines.
44. Furthermore, since we are holding a hybrid meeting including electronic elections, we have needed a technical/software assistant to serve as “polling officer”. Ms. Veronique Whalen, who did such an excellent job during the last few years is not available this year. Looking forward, as we continue to advance our use of technology, such a technical assistant will become a regular requirement.
45. Concerning languages, we have tried to have summaries of documents in French and Spanish as well as English. English remains the working language for FAFICS, but we will continue to publish as much as possible in three languages, making use of technology for much of the work and volunteers for the Council reports. These volunteers deserve our thanks.

### Final Words

46. In conclusion, I believe that the year behind us has been a positive one: Our internal discussions about Rules are all but over, we are working on communications and ensuring full transparency as we do our work. Our representatives on various Pension Board bodies are well respected and very active. Both our Standing Committees are active. Our Federation is growing.
47. I thank you all for the support that you have shown me during the previous year and am grateful for the opportunity to serve this important Federation, representing people who have served the world in their careers and continue in many ways to represent the principles of the United Nations in their daily lives.