



QUARTERLY News

The magazine of the Association of Former WHO Staff Members (AFSM)

Supporting former staff and helping them to stay in touch and informed



Photo: © Simon Bruty/OIS

Paris 2024 Paralympic Games

WHO and the International Paralympic Committee teamed up to highlight the power of assistive technology at the Paris Paralympics with the *“Equipped for equity”* campaign.

“The Paralympics show us what is possible, and the important role that assistive technology plays for these extraordinary athletes” said Dr Tedros.

See *“Highlights of other News from WHO”* on page 17

THE 6TH GLOBAL COUNCIL OF AFSMs AT THE WHA

Thanks to the generosity of Dr Tedros, representatives from the Regional AFSMs were invited to Geneva to attend the WHA, and to hold their first face-to-face Global Council meeting. Unfortunately the AFSM-EMR representative was unable to attend. The main picture depicts an historic event: the Presidents of the Regional AFSMs seated in the reserved AFSM area at the Assembly (despite the typo in the nameplate). The smaller photos show the same group enjoying lunch, and with the plaque of appreciation presented to Dr Tedros in recognition of his efforts to include former staff and their associations in the WHO family. (See *News from Former WHO Staff Members Associations around the world, on page 23*)



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EDITORIAL

As WHO's 75th anniversary year draws to a close, we did not want it to pass without a message from AFSM. A member of our editorial board suggested that photos of all WHO directors-general could make an interesting souvenir for our members. Their photo-portraits are on display in the HQ main building and our selection of these photos are included in this issue, from page 10.

Two of our members have jointly published a beautifully produced book combining their art and poetry, reviewed on page 20. We hope you will enjoy their undoubted artistic and literary talents.

The late Fernando Botero is the interesting artist who is the subject of our report on page 30. He painted, drew, and sculpted grossly oversized humans and animals. If not in line with WHO's efforts to reduce obesity, they do make compelling images.

There is no Reader's Recipe in this edition. If you have a simple tasty recipe suitable for winter temperatures, and which you would like to share, please send (signed or anon) your suggestion to the editor.

Once again, because of space restrictions the printed version of QNT cannot include all items published in the digital version. If you are willing to consider cancelling the printed editions, please send a short message to aoms@who.int.

Keith Wynn

EDITORIAL BOARD

Keith Wynn, *Editor-in-Chief and layout*,
Sue Block Tyrrell, David Cohen,
Catherine d'Arcangues,
Barbara Fontaine, Lindsay Martinez,
JP Menu, Dev Ray, Rosemary Villars.

The translation of all articles is undertaken by the Editorial Board and Michèle Evans, Edmond Mobio and Anne Yamada.

The opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Editorial Board.

Please send your contributions for publication in QNT to: Keith Wynn
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We very gratefully acknowledge the invaluable support of the Printing, Distribution, and Mailing Services.

IMPORTANT CONTACTS

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Health Insurance (SHI): Tel.: +41 (0) 22 791 18 18; in case of absence please leave a message, someone will call you back, or send an e-mail to: shihq@who.int. The HQ SHI Helpdesk in office L 3 is open, by appointment only, on Tuesdays, 10.00–12.00 and 14.00–16.00.

Pensions (UNJSPF): Contact by e-mail no longer possible, to send an **electronic message** use the contact form on the Fund's website, <https://www.unjspf.org/contact-us/>. **Visitors: Geneva:** Palais des Nations, Client Support Centre, Building H, 1st floor, on Tuesday and Thursday mornings, from 10:00 to 13:00. **New York:** 4th floor, 1 Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza (DHP), Corner of 48th Street and 2nd Avenue, New York, Tuesday and Thursday afternoons, from 12:00 to 16:00. **Documents for NY by post, address to:** United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund, c/o United Nations, P.O. Box 5036, New York, NY 10163-5036, USA. **Documents for NY by courier (DHL, etc.) or registered mail, address to:** United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund, 37th floor, 1 DHP, 885 Second Avenue, New York, NY 10017, USA. **Documents for Geneva, address to:** UNJSPF, c/o Palais des Nations, CH-1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland. **Telephone: Geneva:** +41 (0) 22 928 88 00 or **New York:** +1 212 963 6931. **See also the list of Toll-Free and local numbers** at <https://www.unjspf.org/contact-us/>. In the case of **non-receipt of the monthly benefit** or **the death of a beneficiary**, visit the website: <https://www.unjspf.org/emergency/> for instructions.

Remember to always have your Unique ID number handy when contacting UNJSPF.

News from your Association

Elections

The call for candidates for the next Executive Committee closed on 2 August. We received 13 candidates for 12 members to be elected. 11 current members of the Committee submitted their candidatures, as well as Ambi Sundaram (co-opted in 2022) and Jeanne Schmid-Ryan.

The Committee has studied the situation: in the interest of the Association, to avoid a long and costly election process ending with the embarrassing rejection of a single candidate, Jeanne has kindly agreed to withdraw while wishing to be co-opted by the next Committee. Her co-option will be on the agenda of the first meeting of the new Executive Committee in October.

The members of the Executive Committee from October 2024 to October 2026 will therefore be:

- Michèle Bernard Evans
- Barbara Fontaine
- Ambi Sundaram
- Sue Block Tyrrell
- Jean-Paul Menu
- Ann Van Hulle-Colbert
- Robert Bos
- Edmond Mobio
- Keith Wynn
- Laura Ciaffei
- Dev Ray
- Anne Yamada

David Cohen, Honorary President.

Reception

The Committee discussed holding an end-of-year reception in October 2024. Prior to the Covid epidemic, we organized a reception every year. However, due to the low attendance in recent years, and the significant financial cost to the Association, it was decided not to hold one this year and to organize the next reception in 2025, on the same day as our next General Assembly, with the hope that many of you will participate. We would like to have your opinion regarding the frequency of these receptions in the future: annual or biennial? Please let us know. We will also consider the possibility of organizing lunches where everyone would pay their share. Your views on this proposal would also be appreciated.

Flu Vaccination

At the time of writing, we have not yet received any information or dates for the vaccination sessions organized by the Staff Health and Wellbeing Service. We have been promised these for mid to late September and we will be sure to inform you by e-mail as soon as we receive them.

Renewal of the plastic Staff Health Insurance (SHI) cards in 2025

Due to conflicting information that some of you may have received, we have obtained confirmation from the SHI that all retirees affiliated to the Staff Health Insurance will receive this card automatically in 2025, without having to request it. The card will be valid for five years.

Following that, the automatic issuance will only be for those who do not have access to SHI Online.

The AFSM Executive Committee and the Editorial Board of the Quarterly News

SHI: STAFF HEALTH INSURANCE MATTERS

Procedure in case of hospitalization

Don't get caught out, know your rights, and your obligations

We are frequently approached by our members who find themselves in need of assistance, for instance with their health insurance/healthcare issues.

One lesson to be learnt in most cases is the importance of making sure that you are familiar with the Staff Health Insurance (SHI) rules and procedures. Knowing your rights and obligations will avoid unpleasant surprises.

It is extremely important to liaise with SHI in the case of hospitalization. For major medical treatment or major surgery, advance approval is required. Further details are found under SHI rules B10, B20, B30, B50 and B70. In some cases, a medical report is required (these instances are indicated in the rules under the column "*Requirement for consideration*" in section B).

If the duration of the hospital stay exceeds the duration initially estimated, keep SHI informed as a further medical report may be required. We have seen cases where the hospital is ready to discharge the patient, but a return home is not an option unless adequate nursing care and household help are available. The patient may need to transfer to a nursing home facility for instance. If there is no immediate vacancy available in an appropriate nursing home, it is important to note that SHI will not cover the extended stay as hospitalization but as a stay for nursing services. SHI rule B81.3 will apply. Reimbursement will be limited to USD 100 per day for the cost of nursing services. The cost of board and lodging will not be covered. An alternative may be to return home and have someone provide meals and household services in addition to a nurse as and when required. Each case is different so the solution will depend on the care and other services required and available.

It is very important however to realize that SHI will not continue to cover hospitalization beyond what is required medically. Once the hospital is ready to discharge a patient, SHI will only cover nursing services.

For more information do not hesitate to contact the SHI Help Desk for general questions related to hospitalization by email: shihq@who.int or if you have a planned hospitalization the SHI Direct Payment team by email: directpayment@who.int.

If you are unable to take care of the administrative tasks involved with SHI, it will be necessary to identify a family member, friend or social assistant who can do so on your behalf.

Lastly, as one advances in age and feels that one's autonomy is diminishing, it is important to identify either appropriate home help or an institution capable of meeting one's needs at an affordable cost when the time comes.

Former staff members should ensure that their spouse is familiar with the SHI rules so that they know what to expect.

Being well informed and well prepared avoids problems if you suddenly fall ill.

Ann Van Hulle

FEDERATION OF ASSOCIATIONS OF FORMER INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SERVANTS (FAFICS)

Highlights of the 54th Session of the Council of the Federation of Associations of Former International Civil Servants (FAFICS)

After-service Health Insurance and Long-term Care

The Federation of Associations of Former International Civil Servants (FAFICS) Council meeting was held in Bangkok from 22 to 25 July 2024. The sessions on After-service Health Insurance and Long-term Care (ASHIL) were attended, via videoconference, by the undersigned.

FAFICS is an entity which brings together Associations of retired International Civil Servants from the UN and the Specialized Agencies of the UN. There are currently 64 Member Associations of FAFICS, located in various parts of the world, with a total membership of about twenty thousand retirees. The Federation provides a framework for promoting and defending the interests of former civil servants, most notably in pension and health insurance issues.

As WHO has its own independent health insurance financed by contributions from the Organization and the participants, not all recommendations from FAFICS are relevant to former WHO staff. Nevertheless, all former staff of international organizations benefit from the advocacy and actions of FAFICS to defend our common interests.

I have recently become a member of the Core Group of the ASHIL Standing Committee (SC) currently comprising seven members including the Chair. The Council meeting examined the report of the work carried out by this SC during the year which included a special focus on the Medical Insurance Plan (MIP) for local staff of major UN organizations.

The SC also reported on the review of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) report on ASHIL of UN and the Specialized Agencies of the UN and in particular its conclusions and recommendations on Long-term Care. The JIU report pointed out that there is a wide variety of health insurance schemes covering active and retired staff members and families within the UN system organizations. This is normal bearing in mind that the structure of the various organizations is different. Some organizations have most of their insured population located close to their Headquarters, whilst others have a population scattered across the globe. Depending on where the insured population works and resides, the requirements can vary. Nevertheless, it is important to have a minimum set of principles and standards to ensure equitable treatment of all. The JIU report recommended that all groups of Plan members should be included in the Health Insurance Plan management oversight or advisory committees. We in WHO are fortunate to have elected members on the global governance committees of our health insurance. The JIU report also observed that the ASHI liabilities are underfunded in some organizations. As far as WHO is concerned, we are in a favorable position in this regard as the most recent actuarial evaluation showed that more than 80% of the ASHI liability is funded. The JIU report also pointed out that

Long-term Care is generally not covered and remains an unmet need. Only 8 organizations include some long-term care coverage. JIU recommends establishing a separate insurance scheme covering these types of risks. It should be noted however, that such insurance can be very costly and may not be an option for current retirees because of age restrictions to enter. Finally, the JIU recommendations are not binding for organizations but can be very helpful for policy-making within the organizations.

The ASHIL SC reported that a general survey on ASHIL was carried out among FAFICS Associations during the year. A separate survey among African Associations was conducted focusing on questions of concern to that region. The response rate to these surveys was satisfactory. In view of the variety of schemes and level of insurance coverage, the level of satisfaction with health insurance arrangements varies between schemes and countries of residence. In most cases, however, the

level of satisfaction was relatively high. Response to the African survey demonstrated the challenges faced in that region in accessing healthcare in the country of residence. This results in former international staff seeking healthcare outside of the country of residence. This is frequently not an option for former local staff. The main factor limiting access abroad is the cost of transportation.

There was general agreement that FAFICS should continue engaging in matters related to health insurance which, according to most member associations, is a priority for FAFICS on a par with pension issues.

The ASHI SC plans to continue meeting on a monthly basis to pursue its workplan for the next cycle covering the period August 2024 to July 2025 based on recommendations adopted by the Council. This will include exploring solutions for long-term care insurance.

Ann Van Hulle

Pension Matters

At its 2024 Council the Federation of Associations of Former International Civil Servants (FAFICS) devoted one full day to pensions, a topic of perennial interest to retirees. Informative presentations were given by the Chief Executive of Pension Administration (CEPA) and the Representative of the Secretary General, Head of Investment (RSG), complemented by excellent Council documents prepared by FAFICS representatives to the Pension Board and its various committees.

The Pension Fund continues to grow.¹ There are 149,848 participants, representing a 4.34 % increase over the last year. During the same period, the number of beneficiaries increased 2.41% to 86,018 of which 59,405 are retirees while the remainder include survivors, disability cases and children. In 2023, contributions (monthly amounts paid into the Fund by serving staff) totalled US\$ 3.4 billion while benefit payments amounted to US\$ 3.5 billion. With contributions almost covering benefit payments, the Fund drew on very little of its capital to cover costs.

The July 2024 country of residence data indicates that although Pension Fund retirees are present in 214 countries and territories (UN nomenclature) spanning the globe, they tend to cluster in certain areas. The country of choice continues to be the United States with 9,691 retirees living there, while the WHO European Region is home to almost 25,300 retirees of whom more than 22,000 live in the EU/Schengen economic area. The Region of the Americas is home to more than 15,300 and the other regions have retiree populations ranging from around 3,000 in both the Western Pacific and the Eastern Mediterranean Regions to almost 3,700 in the South-East Asian Region and approximately 8,500 in the African Region.

¹ All numbers as of end 2023.

Over the past twenty-one years, the evolving beneficiary demographics, excluding children, continue to show increasing longevity. From 2000 to 2023, the under 60 group increased slightly in numbers from 6,512 to 7,430 whereas the older age groups have increased substantially, the oldest groups reflecting the largest increases. In the 60–69 age group, the increase is almost 42%, from 16,269 to 23,070. For the 70–79 age group, the numbers have more than doubled from 12,167 to 25,320 making it the largest age group of beneficiaries. Beneficiaries 80 years or more number more than 19,000 with the 80–89 age group more than tripling from 4,417 to 15,052, and almost an eight-fold increase for the 90+ group from 509 to 4,062.

The combined efforts of retiree associations around the globe and the Staff Pension Committees were quite successful in tracking down missing 2023 Certificate of Entitlement (CE). In 2023, 953 benefits were suspended due to non-receipt of the CE, the lowest number in recent history. This compares to 1,264 suspensions in 2022. The CEPA expressed her gratitude for this fruitful collaboration. The Digital Certificate of Entitlement continues to gain in popularity, with more than 33,000 submitted already in 2024 representing more than 40% of the eligible population.

The Pension Adjustment System provides beneficiaries with a pension amount periodically adjusted by the movement of the Consumer Price Index (CPI). For those subscribing to the “**Two-Track System**”, their pension is adjusted by the local Consumer Price Index (CPI) instead of the United States CPI, the latter being the case for beneficiaries on the dollar track whatever their country of residence. Designed primarily for beneficiaries living in countries where the cost of living is high and the economy is stable, the Two-Track system in essence provides protection to the purchasing power in the country of residence. About 85% of Two-Track benefits are concentrated in 10 countries of which seven are in Europe. These countries, in decreasing size of retiree population are: France, Switzerland, Austria, Italy, UK, Spain and Germany. The remaining three are Canada, India and Thailand. The number of

retiring staff opting for the Two-Track system continues to decrease and payments made on the Two-Track system represented 17.4% of all UNJSPF benefit payments at the end of 2023, compared to 21.6% at the end of 2022. Underlying this downward trend is the currently favourable US dollar exchange rate. On the other hand, if the exchange rate trend changes, then retirees on the dollar-track residing outside the USA would always have the possibility at any time to switch to the local currency track. However, once on the local track, one cannot revert back to the dollar track, except if one moves to the USA.

A dedicated team at UNJSPF monitors the various economic criteria country by country to determine country eligibility for the Two-Track option. If certain economic criteria are not met, or there is a pronounced difference in benefits for retirees who have the same salary history and same years of service, this option may be suspended. As of 1 November 2024, this will be the case for seven countries, namely Czechia, Estonia, Haiti, Lithuania, Sierra Leone, Suriname and Uruguay, bringing the total of suspended countries to 86 or roughly half of the non-US-dollar-based countries where beneficiaries reside. Although to date, no suspended country has ever been reinstated, the Pension Fund is currently considering the possible reinstatement for eight or nine countries in April 2025.

The Pension Administration continues its efforts towards a digital and data-driven organization, with a timeline to modernize its systems over the next five years. In addition to reducing data discrepancies, the new CRM (Client Relationship Management) should eliminate some of the problems currently encountered by surviving spouses since they will now be tracked in the new system. In parallel, the CEPA reminded all retirees to prepare the necessary documents for a surviving spouse.

The overall Fund value is steadily on the increase, thanks to skillful management of the Fund’s Office of Investment Management (OIM). As of 31 December 2023, the investment portfolio value was USD 88.25 billion, an increase of USD 10.33 billion compared to the end 2022 value of USD 77.92 billion, reflecting thus 13.26% growth in

value. The good news is that the upward trend continues with an historic high of USD 94.5 billion (unaudited) as of mid-July 2024. The Representative of the Secretary General (RSG) reminded the Council that ours is a **“Defined Benefit Plan”, meaning that the risk is carried by the Fund and not the individual** and informed that such pension plans are becoming a rarity.

As of end 2023, the annualized nominal rate of return was 7.49% over the last 15-year period, in comparison to the benchmark of 7.68%, while the real rate of return over the last 30 years was 4.48%. The current actuarial assumption for the rate of return was decreased from 3.5% to 3.4% for the long-term (30+ years) as a result of the assumed increased inflation rate from 2.5 to 2.6%. (See QNT 135 pension article for more on actuarial valuation.) In light of the modified expected real rate of return and the recent (unexpected) high inflation rates leading to higher, unplanned, cost of living adjustments, the required contribution rate

established by the 2023 actuarial evaluation was slightly increased. In short, the Fund’s financial position continues to remain strong.

Small pensions are a perennial topic at the Council and FAFICS has offered to work with the Pension Administration to develop a long-term mechanism for small pension adjustment.

WHO retirees are represented by FAFICS at the Pension Board and on several of its committees. Currently, FAFICS representatives participate in the Standing Committee on Pension Issues, the Budget Committee, the Audit Committee, the Fund’s Solvency and Assets and Liabilities Monitoring (FSALM) Committee, the Ethics Committee, the Succession Planning and Evaluation Committee and the Plan Review Group. FAFICS voice is loud, clear and sound in defending pensioners’ rights and interests.

Barbara Fontaine

NEW MEMBERS

We have pleasure in welcoming the following members into the AFSM family

New Life Members

Joachim Hempel
Chantal Streiffert Garon

Conversion to Life members

New Annual Members

Sylvia Beke-Wilson
Philippa Easterbrook
Breeda Hickey
Rudolf Tangermann

CLOSURE OF THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY YEAR**After the 75th anniversary....**

Since its debut in April 1948, WHO has achieved many successes and faced many challenges in public health, of which former staff surely have many memories. The photos of all the WHO directors-general who have presided, with their dates – formerly displayed in the ‘old’ main building (A) and presently in the new building (B) – may provide an interesting souvenir as the 75th anniversary comes to an end.

In the words of the first Director-General...

Dr Brock Chisholm, in his Foreword to *The first ten years of the World Health Organization*, expressed confidence in WHO’s future, having noted an increasing desire among Member States and many scientific institutions to take part in its activities, and that results were already being achieved despite difficulties and setbacks. The number of Member States increased from the first 55 in 1948 to the present 194.

The directors-general of the World Health Organization

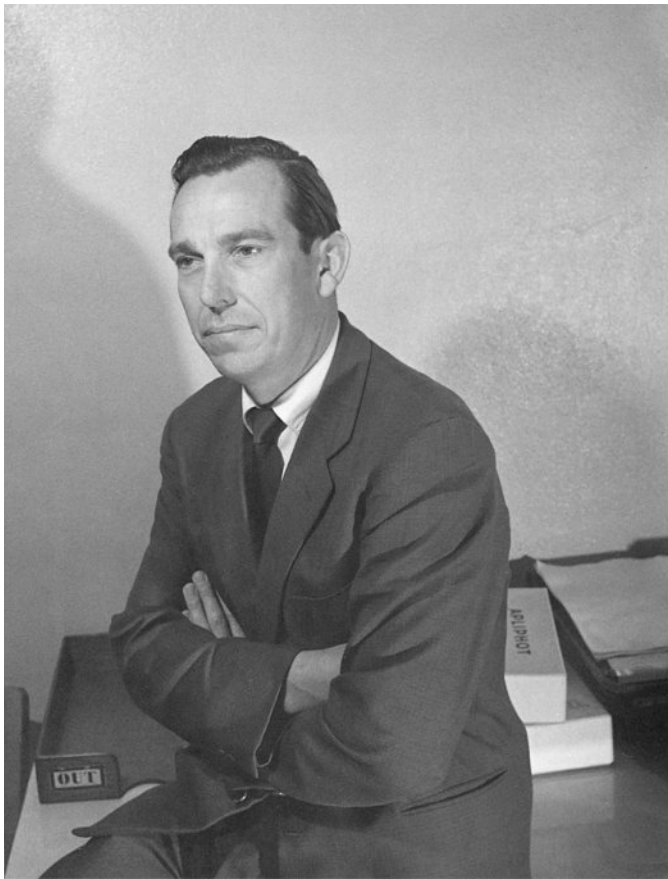
Dr Brock Chisholm (Canada) – 1948 to 1953

Photo: © WHO



Dr Marcolino G. Candau (Brazil) – 1953 to 1973

Photo: © WHO



Dr Halfdan T. Mahler (Denmark) – 1973 to 1988

Photo: © WHO



Dr Hiroshi Nakajima (Japan) – 1988 to 1998

Photo: © WHO / Tibor Farkas



Dr Gro Harlem Brundtland (Norway) – 1998 to 2003

Photo: © WHO / Pierre Virot



Dr Lee Jong-wook (Republic of Korea) – 2003 to 22 May 2006 † Dr Lee tragically died in office.

Photo: © WHO



Following the sudden death of Dr Lee, **Dr Anders Nordström** (Sweden) became Acting DG – 23 May 2006 to 8 November 2006 *Photo: © WHO / Violaine Martin*



Dr Margaret Chan (China) – 9 November 2006 to 2017

Photo: © WHO / Violaine Martin



Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus (Ethiopia) – 2017 to present

Photo: © WHO / Christopher Black

In the words of the present Director-General...

Dr Tedros, when addressing former staff in 2023, stressed the continuing need for WHO in today's world with its many challenges, and that WHO continues to need its staff, both past and present.

We appreciate Dr Tedros's interest in former staff and their involvement in the ongoing work of WHO.

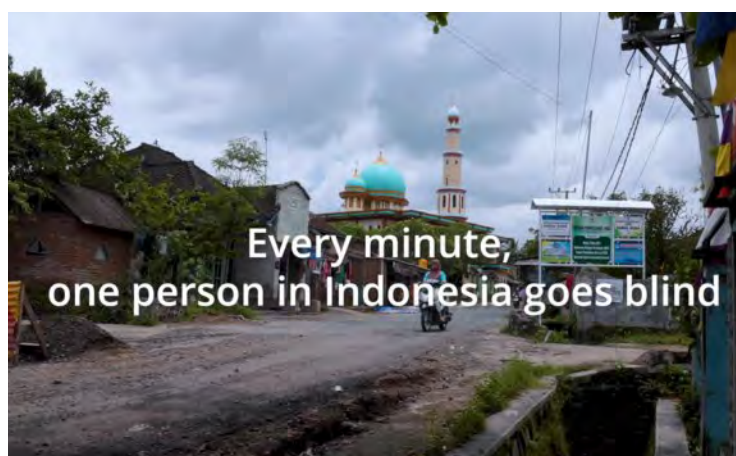
NEWS FROM WHO

Highlights of news from WHO

Governing Body meetings

77th World Health Assembly, 27 May – 1 June 2024

On the eve of the Assembly, WHO launched its Investment Round and announced the winners of the 5th edition of the Health For All Film Festival. The event featured a live performance by the Egyptian opera singer Farrah El Dibany, accompanied by the Franco-American pianist Jeff Cohen, and the film festival winners were announced by the Indian actor, film-maker and social advocate Nandita Das,



A clip from the Grand-Prix-winning film in the Universal Health Coverage category, "*The Visionary Women of Indonesia*".

A Blindness Documentary directed by Nalin Narang from The Fred Hollows Foundation (Australia)

and the film festival winners were announced by the Indian actor, film-maker and social advocate Nandita Das, <https://www.who.int/initiatives/health-for-all-film-festival/official-selection-and-awards/2024/award-winners>.

Invited guests for the Investment Round launch were H.E. Mia Mottley, Prime Minister of Barbados (who received one of the Director-General's Awards for Global Health, see below); Gordon Brown, former UK Prime Minister and current WHO Ambassador for Global Health Financing; H.E. Nisia Trindade, Minister of Health of Brazil (video statement);

H.E. Hanan Mohamed Al Kuwari, Minister of Health of Qatar; H.E. Jan Christian Vestre, Minister of Health of Norway; Frédéric Valletoux, Minister Delegate in charge of Health and Prevention, France; and Gabriel Leung, The Institute of Philanthropy. The Investment Round marks the start of a year-long series of engagements and events, co-hosted by countries, where Member States and other donors will be invited to contribute funds to WHO's strategy for 2025–2028.

The Investment Round will culminate in November with a major pledging event to be hosted by Brazil during the G20 Leaders' Summit.

With the theme for this year of "*All for Health, Health for All*", this year's challenging Assembly was held under the presidency of the Honourable Dr Edwin Dikoloti, Minister of Health of Botswana.

Thanks to the DG's generosity, all the Regional AFSMs were invited to send one representative and, as you will have seen from the article in the July *Quarterly News*, this permitted us to have our first face-to-face meeting of the Global Council of AFSMs on the Saturday preceding the Assembly. All our Regional colleagues participated with us in Walk the Talk on Sunday 26 May (see the article in the July edition, QNT 136) and we were all delighted to sit behind the AFSM nameplate in the Assembly meeting rooms.

The high-level welcome in the morning of 27 May included addresses from H.E. Elisabeth Baume-Schneider, Federal Councillor of the Swiss Confederation; Ms Farrah Eldibany, Egyptian opera singer who gave another live performance; H.E. Mohamed El Ghazouani, President of Mauritania and Chairperson of the African Union; and Thomas Bach, President of the International Olympic Committee. Video statements were delivered by H.E. António Guterres, UN Secretary-General; H.E. Anwar bin Ibrahim, Prime Minister of Malaysia; H.E. Srettha Thavisin, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand; and H.E. Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission.

At the end of the high-level segment, Dr Tedros presented the Director-General's Award for Global Health to Professor Katalin Karikó and Professor Drew Weissman of the University of Pennsylvania for their outstanding contributions to the development of mRNA vaccines for Covid-19. As indicated above, H.E. Mia Mottley, Prime Minister of Barbados, had received her award at the launch of the WHO Investment Round event the day before, in recognition of her leadership in climate action and health and her work as the Chair of the Global Leaders' Group on Antimicrobial Resistance.

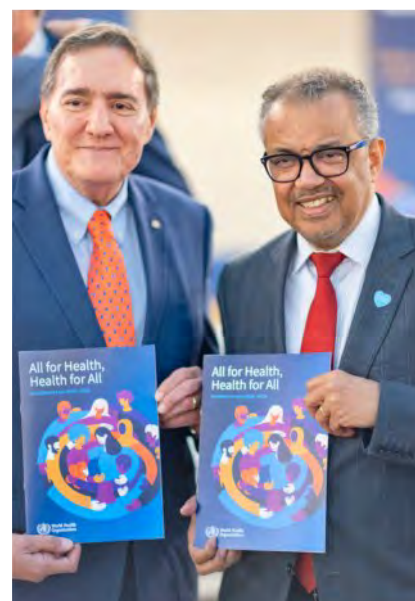
The DG's address at the high-level welcome and his opening address in the afternoon of 27 May, can be found at https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA77/A77_3-en.pdf. The DG's report – **Results Report 2023 and Financial report and audited financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2023** – can be consulted at https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA77/A77_19-en.pdf.

The main outcomes of the Assembly were:

- The adoption of the 14th General Programme of Work, 2025–2028, at the level of USD 11.1 billion, https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA77/A77_16-en.pdf
- The adoption of a package of amendments to the International Health Regulations – a historic achievement that makes the world a safer place – https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA77/A77_R17-en.pdf
- Agreement on a path forward for the Pandemic Agreement – to extend the mandate of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body to finish its work to negotiate a Pandemic Agreement within a year, by the World Health Assembly in 2025, or earlier if possible, at a special session of the Assembly in 2024
- In addition, decisions and recommendations were adopted on many key health issues, including antimicrobial resistance; climate change and health; infection prevention and control; maternal, newborn and child health; mental health in emergencies; social participation in primary health care; and transplantation.

Strategic Roundtables took place throughout the week of the Assembly with the theme of “**Invest in global health – Invest in WHO**”. They gave WHO the opportunity to launch the **All for Health, Health for All: investment case 2025–2028** <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240095403> (fundraising to fill a gap of USD 7.1 billion is required: at the event several governments and the European Union reaffirmed their commitments to WHO, including the Government of Singapore which pledged USD 18 million to the Investment Round) and to discuss key issues including the economics of health for all, artificial intelligence, antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and climate change and health. There will be a high-level meeting on AMR at this year's UN General Assembly. There was also a special celebration of 50 years of the Essential Programme on Immunization.

Dr Jarbas Barbosa, WHO Regional Director for the Americas, and WHO Director-General Dr Tedros hold copies of the WHO Investment Case document. Photo: © WHO / Pierre Albouy



In his closing remarks when welcoming the three new Regional Directors and thanking the outgoing Deputy-Director General and Regional Directors, Dr Tedros cited one of his favourite phrases which he always uses for former staff – “**Once WHO, Always WHO**”.

155th session of the Executive Board, 3 and 4 June 2024

Newly elected members are: Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Chile, Costa Rica, Israel, Lebanon, Norway, Poland, Republic of Korea, Somalia, Thailand and Zimbabwe.

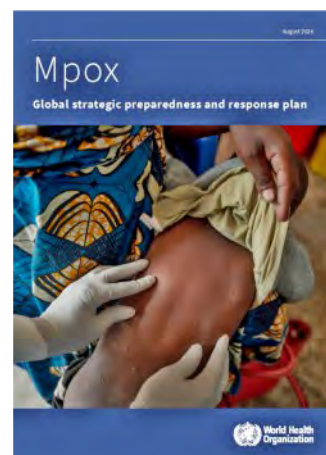
Ambassador Matthew Wilson, Permanent Representative of Barbados to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations at Geneva, was elected Chair of the Executive Board. The Director-General’s opening address can be found at <https://www.who.int/director-general/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-155th-session-of-the-executive-board-3-june-2024>

Highlights of other News from WHO

- On 24 May, WHO released the **Strategic framework for enhancing prevention and control of mpox: 2024–2027**, to guide health authorities, communities and other stakeholders in preventing and controlling mpox outbreaks, eliminating human-to-human transmission and reducing the spillover of the virus from animals to humans. Following the advice of an International



Health Regulations (IHR) Emergency Committee of independent experts which met on 14 August, the Director-General determined that



the upsurge of **mpox and its potential to spread across countries in Africa and outside the continent constitutes a public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC) under the IHR,**

<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240092907>.

WHO needs US\$ 87.4 million over 6 months, from September 2024 to February 2025, to work with countries, partners and other stakeholders to stop and contain the current outbreak of mpox. These funds will be used to implement critical activities outlined in the **Mpox global strategic preparedness and response plan**, released on 26 August.

<https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/mpox-global-strategic-preparedness-and-response-plan>.

- On 27 May, the **Group of Friends of the WHO Academy** was launched. **Supported by France, the WHO Academy campus in Lyon will open its doors at the end of 2024.** Its training programmes will include evidence-based courses available globally online and in-person capacity-building programmes offered in Lyon as well as in Member States. The support of the Group of Friends will enable the Academy to drive lifelong learning in health as a global priority.
- On the occasion of **World No Tobacco Day** on 31 May, WHO released a tobacco industry interference report **Hooking the next generation: how the tobacco industry captures young customers**, <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240094642>.

- On 5 June, WHO launched a new collection of papers published in the **Journal of Global Health** which document scientific evidence on **the health impacts of different climate hazards at key life stages**. During heatwaves, older people are more likely to suffer heart attacks or respiratory distress. The article concerning older people, *Climate change and healthy ageing: An assessment of the impact of climate hazards on older people*, can be found through the link, <https://jogh.org/2024/jogh-14-04101>.



- On 14 June, WHO released its latest report, **2023 Antibacterial agents in clinical and preclinical development: an overview and analysis**, on antibacterial agents, including antibiotics, in clinical and preclinical

development worldwide. **Although the number of antibacterial agents in the clinical pipeline increased from 80 in 2021 to 97 in 2023, there is a pressing need for new, innovative agents for serious infections and to replace those becoming ineffective due to widespread use.** <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240094000>.

- On 15 June, to mark **World Elder Abuse Awareness Day 2024**, WHO released an **interactive database of 89 interventions** that show promise to **prevent and respond to the abuse of older people**. Such abuse is widespread, with around 1 in 6 people aged 60 years and above in the community experiencing some form of abuse every year. <https://explore.decadeofhealthyageing.org/aop-ia>.
- On 20 June, **WHO congratulated Chad for having eliminated the gambiense form of African trypanosomiasis** as a public health problem. It marks the first neglected tropical

disease to be eliminated in the country. Chad is the 51st country to be recognized by WHO for eliminating a neglected tropical disease.

- On 24 June, WHO issued a **milestone report on progress to eliminate industrially produced trans-fat, 2018-2023** <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240089549>. While the target to fully eliminate industrially produced trans-fat from the global food supply by the end of 2023 was not met, **there has been remarkable progress made in every region of the world**. As at the end of 2023, a total of **53 countries had best practice policies in effect**. These policies could help save approximately 183,000 lives per year.
- On 25 June, a new WHO report – **Global status report on alcohol and health and treatment of substance use disorders** highlighted that **3 million deaths per year are attributable to alcohol consumption and drug use**, the majority among men. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240096745>.
- On 26 June, **WHO reported that nearly one third of adults worldwide did not meet the recommended levels of physical activity in 2022**. The level of physical inactivity had increased by about five percentage points between 2010 and 2022. **Physical inactivity puts adults at greater risk of cardiovascular diseases, type 2 diabetes, dementia and cancers such as those of breast and colon**.
- On 2 July, the first-ever **WHO clinical treatment guideline for tobacco cessation** in adults was released. It focuses on helping the more than 750 million tobacco users who want to quit all forms of tobacco. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240096431>.

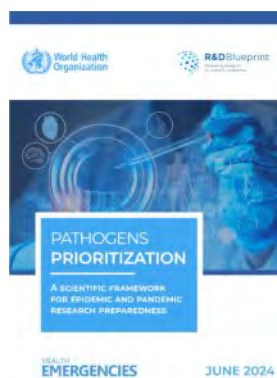


- On 8 July, WHO introduced an **online platform called MeDeViS (Medical Devices Information System)**, the first global open access clearing house for information on medical devices. It is designed to support governments, regulators and users in their decision-making on **selection, procurement and use of medical devices for diagnostics, testing and treatment of diseases and health conditions**. <https://medevis.who.healthtechnologies.org/>.
- On 10 July, **WHO prequalified the first hepatitis C virus self-test** which can provide critical support in expanding access to testing and diagnosis, **accelerating global efforts to eliminate hepatitis C**.
- **WHO provided support to the Paris Olympics** in multiple fields, assisting the International Olympic Committee and France **to help make the Games healthy and safe for athletes and spectators alike**. **WHO and the International Paralympic Committee then joined forces** to highlight the transformative impact of assistive



technology on sports during the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games. The ***Equipped for equity: WHO-IPC Paris 2024 Paralympic Games*** campaign emphasizes the crucial role of assistive technology for Paralympic athletes to advocate for concerted global action to improve access to these essential health products. <https://www.who.int/news-room/events/detail/2024/08/28/default-calendar/equipped-for-equity-who-ipc-paris-2024-paralympic-games-campaign>.

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- On 1 August, the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) and WHO called upon researchers and governments to **strengthen and accelerate global research to prepare for the next pandemic**. At the Global Pandemic Preparedness Summit 2024 held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 29–30 July, **WHO R&D Blueprint** for Epidemics issued a report urging a broader-based approach by researchers and countries. <https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/pathogens-prioritization-a-scientific-framework-for-epidemic-and-pandemic-research-preparedness>.
- 19 August, this year's **World Humanitarian Day**, focused on the normalization of attacks on humanitarian workers, civilian suffering and impunity under International Humanitarian Law. Since the beginning of this year, **WHO has verified over 700 attacks on health** across all regions of the world. Attacks on healthcare (facilities, health workers, infrastructure, transportation, and related services), humanitarian, civilians and civilian infrastructure, have become increasingly common, often in clear violation of international laws. **In 2023, 1520 attacks on healthcare were recorded, resulting in the deaths of at least 750 patients and healthcare workers, and 1250 injuries**.
- **Regional Committees:**
 - **AFRO** – 74th session, 26–30 August, Brazzaville, Republic of Congo.

During the Regional Committee, **in an unprecedented show of unity in support of WHO, 14 African countries and many partners pledged over US\$ 45 million to the WHO Investment Round**, the three-month-old initiative aimed at generating sustainable financing for the Organization. Heads of state and government from across the continent underscored **the importance of investing in global health and ensuring a strong WHO**.

Dr Faustine Engelbert Ndugulile of Tanzania was **nominated as the next Regional Director for AFRO**, taking the reins from Dr Matshidiso Moeti. Other candidates were Dr Boureima Hama Sambo (proposed by Niger) Dr Ibrahima Socé Fall (proposed by Senegal) and Dr Richard Mihigo (proposed by Rwanda). Dr Ndugulile's nomination will be submitted for appointment by the 156th session of the WHO Executive Board, which will take place in February 2025. The newly appointed Regional Director will take office thereafter for a five-year term and be eligible for reappointment once.

- **AMRO** – 76th session, 30 September – 4 October, Washington DC, USA
- **EMRO** – 71st session, 14–17 October, Doha, Qatar
- **EURO** – 74th session, 29–31 October, Copenhagen Denmark
- **SEARO** – 77th session, 7–10 October, Dhaka, Bangladesh
- **WPRO** – 75th session, 21–25 October, Manila, Philippines

Further information and documentation can be found on the WHO website – www.who.int.

Sue Block Tyrrell

ANOTHER AFSM CENTENARIAN

Our 4th known centenarian – Bernadette Rivett

Bernadette celebrated her 100th birthday on 11 August at the home where she lives in Berkshire, England. Bernadette began her career at WHO headquarters in April 1955, providing secretarial support to the teams working in administrative management and personnel, public health administration, dental health, health protection and promotion before becoming the Personal Assistant to Dr F. Grundy, Assistant Director-General in October 1963. In December 1975, Bernadette took on the role of Administrative Officer in staff development and training before moving to the WHO Regional Office for the Western Pacific from January 1980 to July 1983 as Technical Officer in staff development and training.

Bernadette retired on 1 August 1983 but returned as a Consultant for staff development and training workshops and activities between December 1983 and September 1989.

A long and special career.

The Director-General sent a congratulatory letter to Bernadette and our AFSM sent flowers and a card.

Many congratulations Bernadette and *bonne continuation!*



Bernadette about to cut her “100” cake, having just opened the letter from Dr Tedros.

READERS' LETTERS

Winter swimming

The first winter swimmer I encountered was Rosemarie Hintze, a fellow WHO editor; she continued cold-water swimming well into old age. In the mid-seventies this encouraged me to start preparing for the “*Coupe de Noel*”, an annual December event that now brings some 1500 participants to Geneva. However, my preparations only got as far as November before I broke my ankle at tennis.

I took up winter swimming again after retirement and have continued for over 20 years (I am now 86). Unlike most enthusiasts who swim all year round at the *Plage des Pâquis* (which has the added attraction of a sauna!), I prefer to be alone with the

waterbirds at the *Reposoir*, on the rue de Lausanne, a public beach in summer – where I am an occasional swimmer among the joggers, dog-walkers, and windsurfers. I combine my winter swimming with birdwatching: rare Sandpipers from Siberia – unafraid as they may not have seen a human before. Barnacle geese and a red-breasted goose with a small shelduck as a companion sometimes join the resident Canada geese, mallard, red-crested pochard, mandarin duck, various gulls, coots, swans, grebes, merganser, cormorants, wagtails, and on a good day a kingfisher may flash by. I do not feed the birds, however as the photo shows, a Robin settled between my bare feet as I was drying myself.

The buzz, the invigorating effect of “skinny dipping” is hard to explain although some in the medical professions concede its benefits (kill or cure!). For sports injuries, treatment at very low temperatures

is recognized in cryobiology, although there is little science to back up what some call “the cold shock protein” effects on the immune system. Both my physiotherapist and osteopath believe that most people with conditions like my arthritic neck and shoulders would be in a wheelchair, however I am still fending for myself, still getting about, and still playing the violin.

I prefer to think that it is like other activities, not necessarily extreme, that take you out of yourself – learning a language, or a musical instrument, or writing – are positive challenges (thereby revealing my bias as a violin-playing writer and speaker of several languages), as are many volunteering tasks

and hobbies, or just being out in nature. For me, the latter is fulfilled by the inspiring view of Western Europe’s highest mountain seen from across its longest and deepest lake.

There is a general feeling that time spent in cold water should not exceed in minutes the temperature in degrees centigrade: 5°C, 5 minutes, but I have seen many hardened swimmers go much longer, even when – like me, they are not wearing wetsuits.

The season starts in October with water at about 14°C

and one becomes inured to as low as 5°C or 6°C. In Russia the “*Creschenie*” Festival and Porphyry Ivanov (q.v.) and in Scandinavia (Jonna Jilton – q.v.), as in many other places, people are known to break the ice for a dip on special occasions.

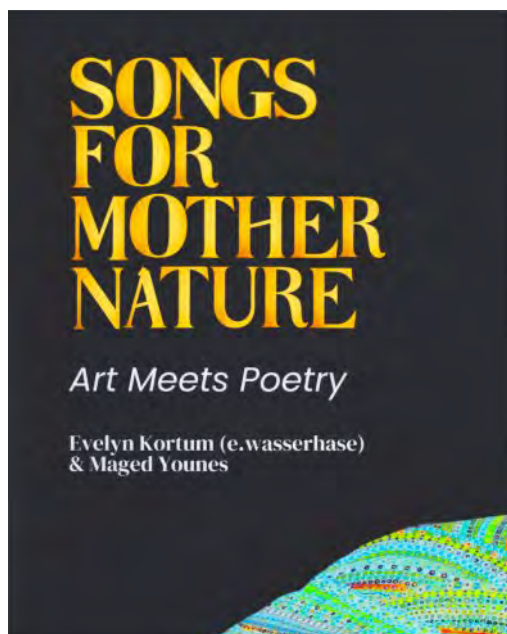
Richard Harrison



BOOK REVIEWS

Songs For Mother Nature: Art Meets Poetry

Evelyn Kortum and Maged Younes



Published: 17 May 2024

Language: English

Hardback: 101 pages in colour

Format: 28 x 21 cms

ISBN-13 979-8323199655

Published by: AWA Literary Agency, USA. www.AWA4Life.com

Available from Amazon:

https://www.amazon.com/s?k=Songs+For+Mother+Nature%3A+Art+Meets+Poetry&i=stripbooks-intl-ship&crd=7GYL17GUSZWC&prefix=songs+for+mother+nature+art+meets+poetry%2Cstripbooks-intl-ship%2C140&ref=nb_sb_noss

Hardback: GBP 26.18, USD 33

e-book: Kindle: GBP 17.87, USD 23

I am delighted to be invited to review the book “*Songs for Mother Nature: Art Meets Poetry*”, written by two of our former colleagues, Evelyn Kortum and Maged Younes. They have found time to nurture their respective passions, one for art – sculpture, painting, ceramics – and the other, for poetry.

This book also reveals the strong bond between them, while demonstrating at the same time the synergy between art and poetry. It is a journey into nature through the experiences of art and poetry. The title reveals the subject matter, with the idea of emphasizing the close connection between our collective responsibility and the environment. For editorial reasons, my comments are necessarily brief. The book opens with texts of Maged’s poems accompanied by drawings, very colourful paintings, composed mostly of “dots” of all sizes. These are Evelyn’s drawings made on tree bark*.

The title of the first part is “*Creation*” and the first poem is dedicated to *Freya*, the goddess of love of the North, whom the Greeks called *Aphrodite*, the Egyptians *Hathor*, and the Romans *Venus*. It combines the themes of nature, femininity and the rebirth of the spirit. In her paintings, Evelyn uses warm colours such as orange, green and purple to evoke the strength and courage of women. At the same time, she combines delicate shades of blue to express the sacredness of women’s role in the eternal flow of life.

In the section on the elements, a large part is dedicated to water: it is the triumph of blue. But the damage caused by drought is also shown to us with scorched earth colours, that predict cosmic damage if humankind fails to collaborate.

In conclusion, this stunning book combines vivid artwork and profound poetry, to offer us important messages about humanity’s sacred relationship with nature and the spirit.

Laura Ciaffei

* Sample pages of Art and Poetry from the book can be found on the following pages.

Examples of the art and poetry from Songs For Mother Nature: Art Meets Poetry.

Goddess Nive

Daughter, do you hear the song
That the Goddess sings for you?
A song that tells you to be strong,
Tough, but soft and loving too?

Let the warmth of Mother Earth,
Warm your heart and light your soul.
With your inner child's rebirth
There will be no doubt at all.

That it's Gaia's loving care
That will nurture you to grow.
Feel the power that she shares,
As into your heart it flows.

Know that you can heal the Earth,
Spread its love and ease its pain,
Help all humans see its Worth,
Find its balance once again.

True creator that you are,
Make the World see that it's true:
You shine like the morning star,
Goddess is in each of you!



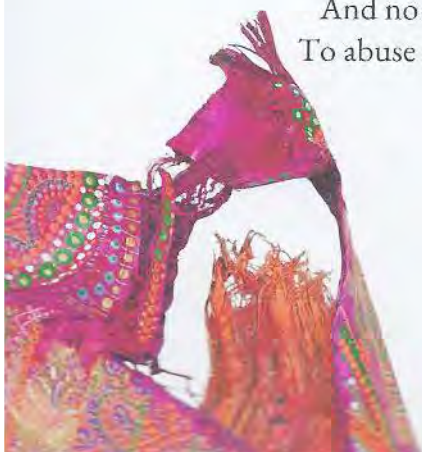
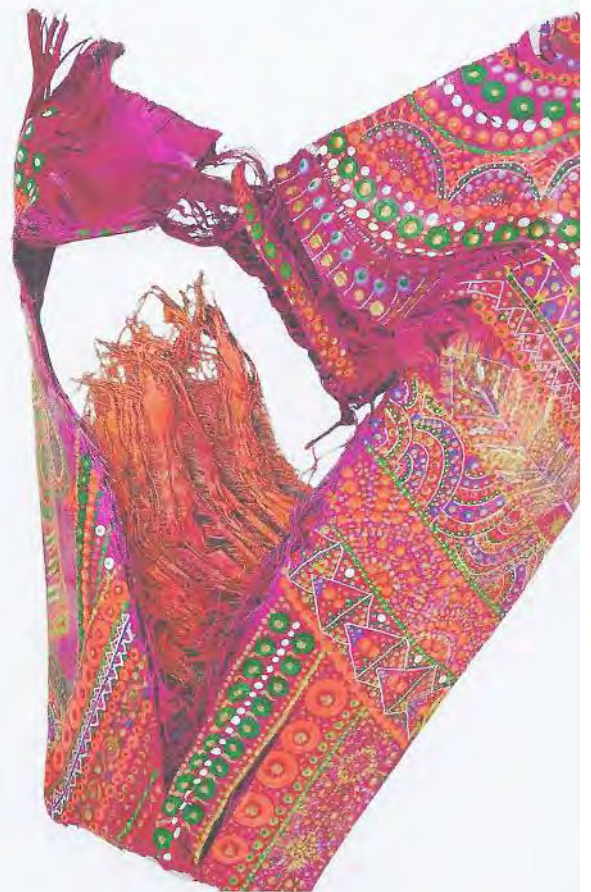
Thunderbird

Thunderbird when you awaken
No sign should be mistaken.
All the spirits of the Earth
Will now witness the rebirth
Of a conscious human race.

You will set the world on fire,
You will fight, lead, and inspire!
Nature will reclaim its power,
From its wounds it will recover,
And will shine in love and grace.

Humans must now understand,
That they never owned the land.
Like all beings they are guests,
And should know that they are blessed
To live under Mother's dome.

If they don't, nature will fight
To establish nature's rights.
There's no master of the Earth,
And no privilege by birth,
To abuse the common home.



NEWS FROM FORMER WHO STAFF MEMBERS' ASSOCIATIONS AROUND THE WORLD

News from the Global AFSMs

Significant progress has been made in all AFSMs

AFSM-HQ: In the July issue we reported on the historic success of the 6th meeting of the Global Council of AFSMs held in Geneva on 25 May. At that time, in the presence of Dr Tedros, four regional directors committed to recognizing their regional AFSM and supporting their activities.

They have kept to their commitment and since then several advances have been made. On 30 July, AFSM-Africa signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Dr Matshidiso Moeti, Regional Director for the African Region, and another Memorandum of Understanding will be signed by Dr Jarbas Barbosa da Silva Jr., Regional Director PAHO/AMRO in October with AFSM-PAHO/AMR. Finally, as you will read in the following articles, significant progress has also been made by AFSM-EUR and AFSM-EMR.

The associations exist to help our retired colleagues and, as the AFSMs of PAHO/AMR, SEAR and WPR highlight in their reports, SHI health insurance remains an important concern. For this reason the Global Council has decided to put SHI on the agenda of each meeting.

The next Global Council meeting is scheduled to be hosted by AFSM-WPR in October.

Jean-Paul Menu and Sue Block Tyrrell

Regional reports

AFSM-EMR: 2024 is the year “when push comes to shove” for our AFSM.

Since 21 March 2021, the date of its initiation, AFSM-EMR identified itself as a service Association to help the retirees of the Region. To meet this target, first it required AFSM-EMR to introduce itself to the retirees, gain their trust, and prove its credibility. The second requirement was to establish a working relationship with the Regional Office.

A measure of the success of the Association so far was marked by AFSM being invited to address the Regional Committee – in October 2023 – the first time this had happened since the foundation of WHO, 75 years ago.

So, **why is 2024 described as the year “When Push Comes to Shove” for AFSM-EMR?** i.e. when the situation reaches a critical point where we must decide on how to progress.

The four critical issues of 2024

1. The election of the new Regional Director for EMRO
2. Election of the President of the Association for EMR
3. Recognition of the role of the Association by more retirees
4. Extending the services to retired WHO staff in all countries of the Region

We are happy to start by saying that we have received positive signals.

1. **Election of the Regional Director.** The newly elected Regional Director Dr H. Balkhy has twice met with the President of the Association. Dr Balkhy was briefed on the role of the Association and achievements made. The importance of the collaboration between the Regional Office and the Association was emphasized.
Dr Balkhy attended the Global Council of AFSMs in Geneva on 25 May 2024, where she commended the role of AFSM. She also recognized the experience of retirees and the need to share their experience with new staff.
2. **Election of a new President of AFSM.** The outcome was the re-election of the present President with a brief to organize the hand-over of the responsibilities to former staff who would be interested to shoulder these responsibilities.
A new Committee was formed and accepted by the retirees.
3. **Recognition of the Role of the Association.** The number of retirees following the work of the Association and referring to the members for assistance in solving their problems increased from 74 at the beginning of the year to 163.
4. **Extending the services to retired staff in all countries of the Region.** This has also developed, the Association is presently receiving requests from different countries, and we are hopeful that this will continue to increase.

Hanaa Ghoneim President AFSM-EMR

WHO Retirees' Representatives in Scandinavia (AFSM-EUR): Three AFSM-EUR representatives participated in the 6th meeting of the Global Council of AFSMs in Geneva on 25 May 2024, in-person (Melodie Karlson) and via Zoom (Sharon Miller and Jenny Madsen). The Director-General addressed the Global Council, as did the four regional directors in attendance, including Dr Hans Kluge, RD-EURO, who voiced his support for establishing a regional AFSM, and for the mission of AFSMs in general.

In-person participants at the Global Council also took part in the fifth Walk the Talk, hosted by WHO on 26 May, and attended the Opening session of WHA77 for the first time as official Observers. Melodie Karlson had the opportunity to network with the President of the EURO Staff Association (EURSA) at the WHA77 reception hosted by the Swiss Government, given that both associations support staff at different stages of the work cycle, EURSA during active employment and AFSM after retirement.

The volunteer AFSM-EUR administration team plans to conduct a voting process to formalize the association. Draft Statutes will be circulated for review and comment by former WHO staff members residing in the European Region in September 2024. An electronic ballot will also be used to constitute a Coordinating Committee to manage the association going forward.

The WHO Retirees' Christmas Lunch 2024, which we plan to reinstate as an annual event, is scheduled for Friday, 29 November, from 13.00 to 15.00, in Copenhagen. Details will be circulated by e-mail closer to the event.

Melodie Karlson, Sharon Miller and Jenny Madsen

AFSM-PAHO/AMR: The summer torpor has set in around us, however we remain active.

As we announced previously, we have ready an MOU between AFSM and PAHO/AMRO. It has not been signed yet because the formal ceremony will take place in early October in the context of PAHO/AMRO 61st Directing Council. AFSM has been formally invited for the first time to participate in the meeting. This will give us additional visibility in the eyes of the countries, and we expect to raise issues affecting former staff at the country level there.

We are part of the Healthy Ageing Committee of PAHO. We made a point of insisting that we are not just on the receiving end, but also providing inputs and ideas. Happily, this has been very well received by the Organization and we have already jointly organized two webinars, one on Long-Term Care and one on Fragility and ways to prevent it. Both were well attended, as these are hot issues. Fragility affects us all, and Long-Term Care is a special concern as most countries in the Region do not provide such services other than to those who can afford the very high cost.

AFSM has been heavily involved in supporting the identification of providers in the countries that will accept WHO's SHI card in order to avoid substantial up-front payments. Two pilot programmes were launched, on the basis of which we expect to prepare a protocol for other countries.

And finally, we continue the IT process of migrating into the PAHO/AMRO digital platform. This will make communications with members and overall management much easier, but, like all changes, it takes a lot more time than expected.

Hernán Rosenberg President AFSM-PAHO/AMR

See also Hernán Rosenberg's editorial in the July AFSM-PAHO/AMR Newsletter on page 34 of the e-edition

AFSM-SEAR conveys its greetings.

It was a momentous Global Council meeting that was hosted in May 2024 by the Director-General of WHO, in Geneva, in conjunction with WHA77. The first-ever face-to-face meeting of AFSM Presidents, and more importantly, the attendance of the Regional Directors in the presence of the DG, have achieved much in terms of solidarity of AFSMs, as well as the support and recognition, which will stand us all in good stead.

We in SEAR continue to fulfil our responsibilities towards the interests and welfare of retired colleagues. A significant example during the period has seen us reaching out to survivors of former staff members with assistance in documentation formalities. We helped with death certificates, continuity of pension, final SHI claims, and providing guidance on using the MSS, etc.

One of the challenges that we currently face is the sluggish process of settlement of SHI claims, which we understood was due to a surge in receipt of accumulated claims. AFSM held special meetings with the SEARO-SHI team to alleviate the inordinate delays in settlements and sought a special window of clearances for retirees especially. We hope the situation will now improve.

M.R. Kanaga Rajan President, AFSM-SEAR

AFSM-Africa: AFRO Retired but Not Tired: The fourth General Assembly of the Association of Former Staff Members of the WHO African Region (AFSM-AFRICA) was held virtually via Zoom on 1 August 2024.

The meeting, which brought together 40 participants from 26 countries, was opened by Dr Isseu Diop Toure, outgoing Vice-President, standing in for the outgoing President, Professor Olewale Tomori, who was unable to attend. She welcomed the participants, led a minute of silence in memory of departed colleagues, and highlighted the importance of this assembly marking the tenth anniversary of the creation of the association, officially constituted four years ago in 2021.

The meeting also benefited greatly from the participation of Dr Matshidiso Moeti, WHO Regional Director for Africa, who will complete her term of office in January 2025. Dr Moeti commended the continued contributions of former WHO staff to health development efforts in Africa during her term. She expressed pride in this collaboration, exemplified by the signing of a cooperation agreement between the two institutions on 30 July 2024. She also invited the President of AFSM-AFRICA to participate in the 74th session of the Regional Committee, scheduled to take place in Brazzaville from 25 to 30 August, marking a new era of collaboration that will strengthen assistance to retirees and their families.

The Assembly also reviewed all aspects related to assistance to retirees and their families, including discussions on the updating of the statutes and social and technical activities offered to members. The meeting was chaired by Mrs Assamala Amoiti, assisted by Dr Jachim Saweka.

Kalula Kalambay (President AFSM-AFRICA)

Solange Kouo Epa (Secretary AFSM-AFRICA)

AFSM-WPR: embarks on its information and education activity for retirees. The first of a series has been launched: SHI.

On 1 August 2024, a special hybrid briefing for retirees on the Staff Health Insurance (SHI) was conducted by BFO and the SHI team at the WHO Regional Office. About 20 retirees attended the briefing physically and took the opportunity to re-visit the Regional Office and socialize with former colleagues, while about 25 retirees attended the hybrid meeting via Zoom. *See photos on page 33 of the digital edition.*

Mr Arpit Aggarwal, BFO/WPRO, expressed appreciation for the retirees' demonstrated interest to stay up to date on SHI rules and policies, and assured them of his unit's continuing support. Prior to the event, AFSM collected members' questions and these were submitted to BFO before the meeting, and served to inform the presentations prepared by SHI staff. Furthermore, the SHI team ably responded to additional requests for clarification raised by the participants. Copies of the presentations and the written replies to the list of questions were provided to AFSM which could be disseminated to AFSM members who were not able to attend.

The meeting closed on a positive note with retirees happy to have raised and received answers to their many concerns, and hopeful that similar briefings may be organized in the future possibly including some "soon-to-retire" staff members.

AFSM-WPR is grateful to Mr Aggarwal, BFO, and his team for the very informative briefing and to WPRO Units (ASU and ITA) which provided extremely valuable logistical support.

Linda Milan President AFSM-WPR

IN MEMORIAM

Recent deaths¹ of former WHO staff members as reported to AFSM

Abdou	Ahamada Halidi	08.05.2024	Levav	Itzhak	20.05.2024
Adechi	Rafata	16.12.2023	Lloyd	John S	17.04.2024
Ajavon	Ayayi A	Unknown	Martinez de la Serna	Josefina	31.01.2024
Arya	Lekh Raj	04.01.2024	Martino	Hugo Oscar	29.03.2024
Barry	Oumarou	28.04.2024	McPhail	Johaina J	13.05.2024
Behl	Madan Lal	31.01.2024	Moran	Salvador	04.04.2024
Ben-Ismaïl	Riadh	23.04.2024	Moy	Gerald George	07.06.2024
Bristow	Rudolph	27.04.2024	Mugwagwa	Musekiwa	24.02.2024
Broadhurst	Elizabeth Jean	26.03.2024	Mujaddidi	Ahmad Farid	03.04.2024
Brunet	Michel A G	22.04.2024	Nabende**	Stephen	12.11.2023
Carvalho	Ilacir T	27.03.2024	Ngololo	Lopes Domingos	02.03.2024
Ceron	Nicolas	22.03.2024	Nurarif	Satyawati Hanna	04.02.2024
Diez Del Valle		15.04.2024	Pakhomov	Guennadi	08.06.2024
Dunbar	Robert W	02.05.2024	Petersson	P Owe	27.05.2024
Farkas	Tibor	Unknown	Pukkila	Jukka Tapani	23.04.2024
Fevre-Hlaholuk	Wira	19.04.2024	Shannon	Anne M	24.03.2023
Fianko	Godwin	08.07.2020	Singh	Jamit	03.05.2024
Flahault	Daniel M A L	13.01.2024	St. John	Salome	12.05.2024
Ford	John H	23.05.2024	Toe	Laurent Desire Elie	29.02.2024
Gonzalez	Rene	22.05.2023	Toure	Amara	11.05.2024
Grand-Maison	Genevieve	26.01.2024	Traore	Bakary	21.04.2024
Grill	Maureen D	12.03.2024	Velasco	Remedios	24.09.2023
Guerrero	Alvarado Julio	23.05.2024	Verma	Bipin K	24.05.2024
Gusmari	Vladimir	11.04.2024	Vernengo	Marcelo Jorge	Unknown
Ibrahim	Ibrahim Abdel-Az	17.04.2024	Wabitsch	K Rudolf	08.05.2024
Kitleli	Theresa L	28.04.2024	Yip	June	03.02.2024
Kohistani	Abdul Samad	23.02.2024			

The deaths were also announced of the survivors of former staff members: Balonga, Julienne; Budnik, Sara; Daw, Khin Htwe; Ejler, Kjeld Albert; Fernandez Espinosa, Blanca; Jalique, Salvacion; Le Van, Thi Hien; Nguyen, Kim Hong; Rosselot, Mariana Florez; Roy, Colette; Sarue, Nora Bertoni; Soos, Magdolna; Tarkowska, Krystyna Maria; Tchako, Honorine; Tibax, Genevieve J P M.

¹ The present notification of deaths was gratefully received from UNJSPF and covers Q2 2024. We have endeavoured to ensure that deaths already published have not been repeated in this list, however we apologize in advance if there are omissions or repeat entries. The editorial policy is to publish, once only, the names on the list of death notices we receive, and this regardless of whether an obituary has already been published; appears in the current issue; or will appear in a future issue. List includes former staff of *IARC, **ICC, ***PAHO, ****UNAIDS, *****UNITAID.

Gerald Moy, born 22 March 1946 in Wisconsin, USA, died 7 June 2024 in France



The unforgettable Gerry Moy. There are people whose personalities and services to society make them unforgettable. Gerald Moy was one such person. He passed away on the 7th June and will be sorely missed.

My first encounter with Gerry was in 1990 during a mission to Fiji. We

jointly organized a WHO training course on food safety for inspectors from the Western Pacific region. Despite our initial unfamiliarity, our mission was a success. Over time, our professional relationship grew into a lasting friendship. Under Fritz Kaferstein's leadership, together with Fernando Quevedo, we formed a think-tank at WHO to advance global food safety management.

Gerry's unwavering dedication to food safety and public health, particularly management of chemicals, is commendable. His extensive body of work, from WHO reports to articles and various projects, is a testament to his enthusiastic and

dynamic approach to his profession and ability to take on new challenges. He was very generous in sharing his knowledge and helping others.

His wife, Joan, quotes him saying, *"He tried to leave the earth and its people better than when he was born into it"*. Here you can hear his testimony through a Ted Talk he gave in 2013 on *"The dangers and delights of global diets!"*,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lyOxFwB7w0Q>

In recent years, he played a key role as a co-editor in producing, together with me, the first Encyclopaedia of Food Safety. His imprint on the world of food safety is impressive and goes far beyond these few words.

He was also a loving and caring father and husband. He leaves behind four children – Jonathan, Matthew, David, and Sarah – all highly educated and like himself devoted to making the world a better place to live. He also had the pleasure to see his grandson, Robert.

His absence will be deeply felt, and his contributions will be remembered and cherished.

Yasmine Motarjemi

Roger Eggleston, born 4 October 1943 in Darwen, UK, died 22 March 2024 in Warwick, UK



Roger studied Public Administration at the University of Exeter, United Kingdom. He then worked for the World University Service in Geneva, where he met Mandy. They married and two children were born, in 1971 and 1972.

In 1973 he joined WHO and was recruited to Fellowships in EURO. However, EURO's role in administering WHO Fellowships from other Regions had become more limited in scale because of the advancement of medical education in the Regions. So, after a couple of years Roger transferred to the South-East Asian

Regional Office (SEARO).

In SEARO, Roger became a Personnel Officer in 1976, supported by two successive and temporary Senior Personnel Officers. I was in SEARO during this time and in my view, they were sent to SEARO from Headquarters to mentor Roger. He very soon became the only P-staff member in Personnel. Those were the days when Regional Offices were given much greater authority in handling regional programme matters, but headquarters kept regional Administration and Finance matters under its supervision. It was only in 1978 that "the rotational status" of P-staff in Regional Offices was abolished. A feature of the professional staff in the SEARO Administration at that time was their youthfulness. As one of the team, I benefitted a lot from discussions with Roger on work issues because

of his insight and wisdom in working with WHO, that I had not yet acquired.

In late-1981 Roger was reassigned back to EURO, this time to Personnel. He remained there until 1983. He then spent several years with Personnel at WHO Geneva until he made an inter-agency transfer to the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (CCAQ which was housed at the *Palais des Nations*) for a brilliant second UN career until his retirement. His international experience, insight, and wealth of knowledge of the UN system will be missed by many colleagues all over the world.

Apart from his family and his international work, Roger had a great passion and knowledge of church music and very skilfully conducted many church choirs, starting in his student days and continuing long after his retirement in England.

He will be greatly missed by his wife Mandy and their two children Sarah Jane and Martin and their families. They all live in England, and the Eggleston children keep in touch with my own offspring, which neatly completes the circle of our friendship.

Clas Sandström

Margaret Laurie Prandle (née Keep), born 13 August 1934 in Totteridge, London, UK, died 4 August 2024 in Abberley, Worcestershire, UK



Margaret was the elder of two sisters. She was educated at Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School, Barnet and then studied for a BA in English, Drama and Latin at Bristol University, graduating in 1955. This was the first year a degree in Drama was offered. She

subsequently obtained a Diploma in Speech and Drama (Teaching) at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. After her degree, she taught English and drama at a grammar school for a while, then switched to a large comprehensive school near Bognor Regis, where she coped with productions involving over 100 children. She then had a change from teaching and, after a short secretarial course which included French, she moved to Geneva in 1962 and was secretary to a lawyer before working at WHO.

Soon after her arrival, Margaret joined the Geneva English Drama Society where she has been described as a "*star performer*". It was here that she met her future husband Arthur Prandle who was Chairman of the Society and worked for the ILO. Margaret joined WHO headquarters in May 1964, providing secretarial support to the programme

working on Malaria Eradication, Research and Technical Intelligence, before moving to Administration, Management and Personnel in July 1965 where she took on the role of Personnel Officer from May 1980 until her retirement end February 1992.

Margaret then returned to England where she lived close to her younger sister, Irene, in Abberley, Worcestershire.

She travelled widely during her retirement, often with her close friend and former WHO colleague Judith Munzinger, exploring such places as Uzbekistan, The Galapagos Islands, Myanmar and Australia.

Margaret has been described by Judith and her friends from WHO, Shelagh Brawand and Jacqueline Spassov (Roux) as; "*always elegant, always cheerful.*" "*This was a friendship we will always treasure.*" "*Margaret was my (best ever and only female) boss in the Personnel department of WHO.*" "*She was a wonderful lady, and we never had a cross word.*"

Margaret kept in touch with the many friends she met through WHO, Holy Trinity Church Geneva and the Geneva English Drama Society up until her death a few days short of her 90th birthday.

Andrew Johnson (Margaret's nephew)

ART EXHIBITION IN ROME, ITALY

BOTERO

Palazzo Bonaparte, Rome

17 September 2024 – 19 January 2025



Palazzo Bonaparte
Piazza Venezia 5
Rome

Opening hours

Monday to Thursday from 09:00 to 19:30

Friday, Saturday and Sunday from 09:00 to 21:00
(the ticket office shuts one hour before).

Phone: + 39 06 87 15 111

Website:

<http://www.arthemisia.it/it/mostra-botero-roma/>

Since the 17th of September, *Arthemisia* and the *Palazzo Bonaparte* in Rome have consecrated their halls to the largest exhibition ever held in Italy dedicated to Fernando Botero (born 19 April 1932 in Medellín, Colombia and died 15 September 2023 in Monaco). An artist much-loved by the public, he was also heavily criticized by art critics for the originality in his life. His public, however, admired him unconditionally. Perhaps because they were reassured by his good-natured faces and exceptional, oversized, dimensions that made life a little more reassuring.

But what kind of artist was Fernando Botero? For the Colombian newspaper *El Heraldo*, the most famous in the history of the South American country. For many critics, a commercial phenomenon, and an artist disconnected from reality. His trademark of oversized bodies, through which the South American painter describes human beings, the world, and nature. Exaggerated volumes, which highlight absolute beauty. Warrior volumes, as he called them, engaged in the daily struggle of life.



Fernando Botero poses in front of his painting *La Fornarina* (after Raphaël), on 3 May 2010. Photo: © Murad Sezer. Reuters

"Art," he said, "is a *spiritual and immaterial respite from the difficulties of human existence.*" Botero falls in love with these offbeat forms, he even finds them sensual. He begins to plump up everything, even the divine.



La Meniña (after Velázquez)
Fernando Botero

Thanks to the exhibition we can trace Botero's entire artistic journey and enter his exuberant and magical world. Among the works on display there are also exceptional unpublished works, exhibited to the public for the first time, such as *La Meniña* (after Velázquez) and *Homage to Mantegna*, which was thought to have been lost. With the first and most complete exhibition of paintings ever held in Italy, a year after Botero's death, *Palazzo Bonaparte* in Rome pays tribute to one of the artists most beloved by the international public. The exhibition, which tells the story of over 60 years of his artistic career, is curated by Lina Botero, the artist's daughter, and Cristina Carrillo de Albornoz, a great expert on his work. Over 120 works of paintings, watercolours, sanguines, charcoals, sculptures and some extraordinary unpublished works, especially loaned for this exhibition, are exhibited in the prestigious rooms of *Palazzo Bonaparte*. Large-scale works representing the sumptuous roundness of Botero's style, rendered with three-dimensional effects and bright, vibrant

colours. A completely new, invented, and poetic universe, which finds its roots in his native Colombia.

The exhibition opens with a very important work never exhibited before, *Homage to Mantegna* (1958), which, missing for decades, was recently discovered by Lina Botero with the help of Christie's. Fascinated by one of the masterpieces of the Renaissance, Mantegna's "*Bedroom of the newly-weds*" in the Mantua Palace, Botero decided to pay homage to the Italian master after his trip to Italy and chose the fresco on the north wall, the scene of the Gonzaga Courtyard in which Ludovico is depicted seated receiving a letter from his secretary, Marsilio Andreasi. Around him are his loved ones: a scene that Botero transformed into his own style, in which he exalted the monumentality and exceptional colour. There is no shortage of versions of masterpieces from the history of art, such as Raphaël's "*Fornarina*", the famous *Montefeltro* diptych by Piero della Francesca, the portraits of the bourgeoisie by Rubens and van Eyck, right up to the last works that Botero created in 2023 such as the *Odalisque*. Another fundamental and unpublished work never exhibited to the public – because it still hangs in Botero's Parisian studio – is a version of the *Infanta* from Velazquez's "*Las Meniñas*". Space limitations prevent me from discussing in detail the works in this exhibition that follows in its splendour, Botero's rich artistic production.



Dancer at the barre (after Degas)
Fernando Botero 2001

Laura Ciaffei

BOTERO at the *Palazzo Bonaparte*, Rome



Federico da Montefeltro,
(after Piero della Francesca)
Fernando Botero



Battista Sforza,
(after Piero della Francesca)
Fernando Botero



Fernando Botero in Monaco on 14 February 2001

Photo: Alain Benainous Gamma-Raphovia, Getty Images

Photos from the AFSM-WPR briefing for retirees on the Staff Health Insurance (SHI)

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This was a hybrid meeting, with participants in the room and on Zoom. The double display allowed everyone to follow the discussions and presentations.



Dr Linda Milan, President of AFSM-WPR, and Mr Arpit Aggarwal, BFO WPRO, enjoying a comment from a participant.



Mr Arpit Aggarwal, BFO WPRO, taking questions from the participants.



A view of the meeting room, generously provided by WPRO.



Some of the participants. **Standing, from left to right:** Dolly Macalincag, Lydia Manuel, Maryann Panes, Dr Nerissa Dominguez, Corrie Francisco, Mae Tan, Je de Leon, Lou Rodriguez, Rhoda Abrasaldo, Rudy Lopez. **Seated, from left to right:** Lily Flores, Novi Palang, Dr Linda Milan, Annie R Nañoz.

The Editorial from the AFSM-PAHO/AMR Newsletter of July 2024

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https://www.afsmpaho.com/_files/ugd/6814f4_bc0143648c4340318a38e7e79f733cbc.pdf

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Editorial

We Are Becoming More Global

By Herman Rosenberg



As we have been informing you over the past couple of years, your Association, together with our peers in all regions of WHO and in Geneva (WHO office) has established the Global Council of AFSMs.

It should be noted that, while our organization is over 30 years old, other regional AFSMs, like EURO, are in the process of formation and consolidation, so the older ones are supporting the newer ones, as there is value not only in solidarity with our colleagues, but also in representing a much higher number and diversity of people.

We have also reported that WHO's DG Dr. Tedros, has been very effective in supporting the institutionalization of the AFSM. What does that mean?



Technically the AFSMs are like a private club of former staff, without representation in WHO matters that affect them, such as pension or health insurance issues. There are seats for the retirees in some bodies, but these are individually appointed, not through a corporative approach. By comparison, the Staff Association sits on several committees, including selection processes and other matters of interest. The process of institutionalization is further complicated by the regional nature of WHO. In the Americas, we have enjoyed very good

relations with PAHO administrations, but that has been due to the good graces of those in authority. We are looking for explicit recognition that does not depend on people's disposition. Dr. Tedros is very interested that the process be global as well as regional. WPRO AFSM, and by October AMRO AFSM, will have a signed Memoranda of Understanding with their respective RDs.

All these matters, along with other issues of relevance, especially those concerning SHI for members living outside the US, were discussed at the generous invitation of Dr. Tedros in the first meeting of the Global Council of AFSMs that took place in Geneva, two days before the inauguration of the WHA. We had four previous meetings, but they were virtual.

All AFSMs were present, except for EMRO, whose representative had to cancel due to health reasons, but both she and her other Board members joined us by Zoom.

As outgoing Chair, we had the honor of opening the session and passing the virtual gavel to AFSM Geneva. Dr. Tedros, accompanied by four RD's, attended the meeting, PAHO/AMRO's RD Dr. Barbosa had not arrived yet in Geneva in time to attend.



I also had the honor of summarizing the regional progress on institutionalization based on information provided by all regions. Some are more advanced than others. We emphasized that this is a two-way street. The Organization supports us, but we also provide services, such as helping locate former staff missing their certificates of entitlement for the Pension Fund, and lately providing inputs for the Healthy Ageing Decade. In his speech, the DG reiterated his support and appreciation for the two-way relationship. He gave an overview of the upcoming WHA, noting the difficult political environment we are facing. The four RD's echoed his words and indicated their intentions to follow AMRO and WPRO in formally signing a MOU with their respective AFSMs.

The DG was honored with a plaque for his unconditional support of former staff, under the motto



“Once WHO, always WHO”, that he has put into practice as much as possible. Additionally, he was presented with a portrait and a caricature, both made by former staff. He was very grateful for the recognition.

In the business part of the meeting, the main topic of discussion was SHI, with presentations by the staff in charge. The main issues had to do with the lack of responsiveness of the system and the complications of communication. We indicated that

this had been a big problem in our region. SHI is aware of the situation. As AMRO's SHI staff positions have been filled, quicker speed in answering former staff queries is expected. The computer system needs upgrading, and a bid has gone out to update it. This also should improve responsiveness. We thanked the explanations and indicated that we will continue monitoring the situation.

Finally, WPRO was elected to take over the Chair and organize the next Council meeting.

The exchanges among representatives were very informative and we have taken quite a few pointers from our peers. Hopefully, we have provided them some ideas as well. The environment was one of comradery, and we ended with a dinner in a restaurant that happened to have Cuban owners with whom we chatted in Spanish, of course.



The weight of the Council is starting to be felt, and we think it is going to be very beneficial for our members. I hope you will support our efforts in this matter.

The full report of the meeting will be posted shortly on our web page.

