



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

At a time when WHO jobs are under threat, we must reduce our cost burden on the Organization and drastically limit the financing of our retiree magazine to the bare minimum number of copies



We request every one of you who uses e-mail to accept receiving this magazine in electronic form only from now on

We will put this item on the agenda for the General Assembly in October requesting that reading online will become the only option for those with e-mail

AFSM SOCIAL EVENTS

Photos of the AFSM lunch held on 7 May 2025



The participants (in alphabetical order) at the 7 May AFSM lunch were: Robert Bos, James & Lucy Cheyne, Janet Clevenstine, Neda Damachi, Carolyn Doucelin, Monique Eïd, Howard Engers, Nadia Hilal McDonald, Catherine Mulholland, Chizuru Nishida, Franci Palen, Dev Ray, Veronique Salamin, Sue Block Tyrrell, Elsa Vitry, Anne Yamada.



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EDITORIAL

English to French translators needed. Our dedicated volunteer translators need more help at busy times, just before publication dates. Translation of just one or two articles per issue would help relieve the pressure on everyone. If willing to be put on the list of translators, be assured that every volunteer chooses which article(s) they would be willing to translate, and there is no obligation to accept every time. Please contact me at wynn@bluewin.ch.

Going Digital. Our request in QNT 139 for 500 volunteers to read the *Quarterly News* on-line and forego the printed edition did not achieve anywhere near this number.

We thank sincerely those members who agreed to switch to the digital edition. However, the WHO financial situation remains our primary concern. The Executive Committee has therefore decided that everyone who has e-mail should accept "going digital", and to ratify our decision, we will put it to the General Assembly.

With the prospect of WHO serving staff losing their jobs, we must reduce the amount WHO pays for printing and postage of a magazine for retirees.

Hence the unusual cover to this edition.

Keith Wynn

EDITORIAL BOARD

Keith Wynn, *Editor-in-Chief and layout*,
Sue Block Tyrrell,
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
wynn@bluewin.ch

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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.

AFSM

News from your Association

Following the decision of the President of the United States to withdraw from WHO, our organization is struggling to cope with budget cuts. Already the Director-General has announced the abolition of several posts within top management.

Our Association conveyed messages of solidarity and offered our assistance as required. We also sent a token contribution of 913 CHF (corresponding to one CHF per member) to the WHO Foundation, in line with its **One dollar, one world** campaign. You can find more information on the financial situation in the article on *News from WHO*.

You will also have noticed the unusual front cover of this issue, forced upon us by this US decision. We expect all of you with email to accept voluntarily to forego the printed copy of *Quarterly News* and will request our General Assembly to formally endorse this decision.

Since 2023, the AFSM has had a reserved place at the World Health Assembly, as an observer. Several members of the Committee took advantage of this to attend the WHA, as illustrated below.



Committee member Ambi Sundaram, representing AFSM, in Committee A on the last day of the Assembly, 27 May.

Photo: © WHO



Ambi Sundaram's view of the proceedings of Committee B at the Assembly on 26 May.

Photo: © Ambi Sundaram



At the WHA plenary session of 19 May, this was the view from AFSM's privileged place, represented by Sue Block Tyrrell.

Photo: © Sue Block Tyrrell

Our General Assembly (hybrid) will be held on 6 October. You will receive an official invitation soon. As on previous occasions, we expect our Director-General to address the Assembly. Questions will undoubtedly be asked about WHO's response to the financial crisis. The meeting will also be a good opportunity to exchange views with the Pension Fund and our Staff Health Insurance. We hope to hold a social event at the closure of the Assembly and look forward to seeing you either in person or online. Please do not forget to mark the date in your diary!

We sent you an invitation to participate in a webinar on the launch of the new WHO Ageism Scale, organized by the WHO and the Global Campaign to End Ageism. We hope some of you attended and would be happy to hear your feedback.

Following the successful organization of a first lunch for local members in February, we held a second one on 7 May, and the next one will take place on 6 August.

As you know, we run a *Permanence* every Wednesday, from 13:30 to 16:00. We encourage members in the Geneva area to visit us if you seek advice or simply wish to share your views with a member of our Executive Committee.

In *Quarterly News* N°136 (July 2024) we announced that we were studying the possibility of providing electronic access to all back issues of the *Quarterly News* as well as the *Directory of AFSM Members*

which will no longer be printed and distributed. Access will be strictly reserved for AFSM members. Work is in progress with the relevant WHO staff to offer you this facility soon.

The *Quarterly News* magazine is meant to be a privileged means of communication between our members. So, we encourage you to submit an article, or send us your comments on recent articles (good, bad or indifferent) for the *Readers' letters* page.

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

PENSION NEWS

The Solvency and Sustainability of the Pension Fund

The Fund recently published a statement to reassure participants and beneficiaries that it remains financially strong and that benefits are secure.

(<https://www.unjspf.org/newsroom/qa-on-the-solvency-and-sustainability-of-the-fund/>).

It addressed the following issues.

The ability to pay benefits is **the key priority** for the Pension Fund. In the event a large number of participants were to leave and no new participants joined, the biennial actual valuation and the quadrennial asset liability management (ALM) study have consistently appraised that the Fund is not particularly sensitive to changing participant numbers. The reason for this is that ***the Fund is not over-reliant on future contributions to fund the benefits already accrued***. Further, the Fund, being highly risk adverse, is geared on all accounts to retain its long-term sustainability and to meet its long-term financial commitments (i.e. paying our benefits), as evidenced by the latest actuarial valuation and ALM study both undertaken in 2023.

The Fund has a number of mechanisms in place to monitor, measure and manage the future financial sustainability of the Fund over the long term (in excess of 30 years). A key tool is the ALM study which allows the consideration of a range of scenarios and the optimal asset allocation to maximize investment returns. Moreover, historically the Fund has consistently generated a real rate of return well above the rate used in the actuarial valuation. However, in the event the

Fund were to experience a number of years of actuarial valuations reporting a deficit, it would commission additional ALM studies to identify a course of action to manage this risk.

Given that financial markets inevitably rise and fall, the Fund's investment portfolio is designed to remain solvent over a long period of time. The key is the diversification of assets to maximize return within an acceptable level of risk. Although short-term fluctuations could lead to a temporary downturn, the focus is on investment returns over the long term. For more than seven decades, the investment portfolio has consistently delivered the minimum required rate of return, despite several crises throughout the years, the latest being the ruckus about tariffs making markets skittish. As a result, in early April the portfolio was valued at US\$ 92.6 billion, down almost 3% from its previous high of US\$ 97 billion. By mid-May, the value was back up to US\$ 96.9 billion.

Bottom line, short-term shocks do not affect the Fund's ability to pay our monthly benefits.

Barbara Fontaine

SHI: STAFF HEALTH INSURANCE MATTERS

Summary of the main points discussed at the recent meeting of the Global Oversight Committee

The 31st meeting of the Global Oversight Committee (Committee) of the Staff Health Insurance (SHI) took place on 3 April 2025. This was a hybrid meeting and both of the undersigned members designated by former staff participated online.

The purpose of the meeting was to review the draft annual report on SHI which was presented by the Secretariat. Some highlights of the report are as follows:

Claims paid amounted to USD 118.4 million whilst contributions amounted to USD 229.4 million.

As indicated previously, SHI aims to cover the actuarial liability for current and future former staff participating in the insurance. This would mean that the assets should be sufficient to cover the costs of former staff claims over a period of 25 to 30 years. At the end of last year, the funded ratio was 79% which compares favourably with that of most other UN system organizations.

Investment return for the year was 6.5% which was good. It should be noted that this was reported before the recent turmoil on the stock market following the US warning of imposition of tariffs at a global level which caused the stock market to decline significantly. Since that decision has been stalled, the markets have regained some of the loss. This is again a proof that investment return for the SHI Fund should be evaluated over a time span of a few years rather than at a precise moment in time.

Overall, the Committee expressed satisfaction with the financial results for the year 2024.

Ann Van Hulle and Alejandro Henning

NEW MEMBERS

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

New Life Members

Ida Akpeje Kouassi
Nora Dellepiane Rey Tolve
Najoua Kachouri Aboudi
John Reeder
Josiane Sidibe
Roland Walter Sutter

Conversions to Life Members

Avis D Chehab

New Annual Members

Sonya Brander
Roseline Karusa Kiragu-Gikonyo
Lesley Jayne Onyon

NEWS FROM WHO

Highlights of news from WHO

News from the 78th **World Health Assembly** 19–27 May 2025 and from the 157th meeting of the **Executive Board** on 28–29 May will be included in the October edition of the Quarterly News, QNT 141. The theme of this year's Assembly was “*One World for Health*”.

The opening remarks by the Director-General at the 42nd meeting of the **Programme, Budget and Administration Committee of the Executive Board** on 14 May can be found at <https://www.who.int/director-general/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-42nd-meeting-of-the-programme--budget-and-administration-committee-of-the-executive-board---14-may-2025>.

In his statement, Dr Tedros announced the makeup of the HQ new executive management team, effective 16 June:

- **Dr Jeremy Farrar**, Assistant Director-General for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention and Control;
- **Dr Yukiko Nakatani**, Assistant Director-General for Health Systems;
- **Dr Chikwe Ihekweazu**, Executive Director of the Health Emergencies Programme;
- **Dr Sylvie Briand**, Chief Scientist;
- **Dr Razia Pendse** remains Chef de Cabinet;
- **Mr Raul Thomas** continues as Assistant Director-General for Business Operations and Compliance.

Decisions about directors to lead departments, downsized from 76 to 34, were scheduled to take place after the Assembly.

Salary expenditures need to be reduced by 25% but this does not mean cutting 25% of staff across the Organization. The most significant reductions will be at headquarters, while Regional Offices will also be affected to varying degrees.

Discussions at the Assembly focused on prioritization of activities in view of the funding cuts, and on the future, with the approval of the Programme Budget 2026–2027 of USD 4.2 billion based on a 21% reduction from the original proposed budget of USD 5.3 billion under WHO's Fourteenth General Programme of Work and WHO's strategy for global health for 2025–2028.

The Assembly also considered the proposal by the **Intergovernmental Negotiating Body to adopt the WHO Pandemic Agreement**. https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA78/A78_1-en.pdf. In addition, the Assembly Agenda contained over 70 other items.

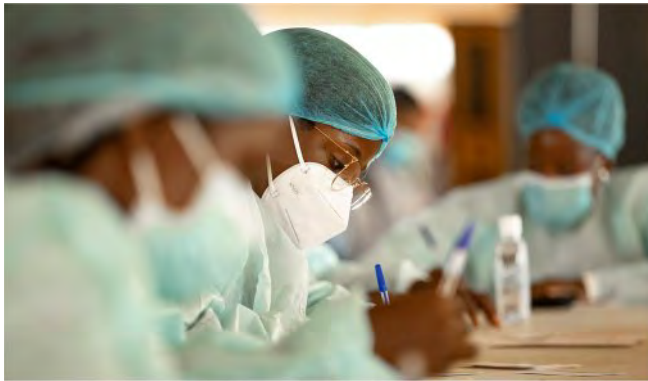
It was an important session, taking place in a challenging environment. Actions were taken by WHO to contain costs, including shortening the length of the meeting, limiting evening sessions and hospitality events, amongst other administrative cost-saving measures.

An item for the Executive Board was to appoint the **Regional Director for the African Region**. **Professor Mohamed Yakub Janabi** was nominated during a Special Session of the WHO Regional Committee for Africa held in Geneva ahead of the World Health Assembly. <https://www.afro.who.int/news/professor-mohamed-yakub-janabi-tanzania-nominated-next-director-who-african-region>. The term of office of the newly appointed Regional Director is five-years with eligibility for reappointment once.

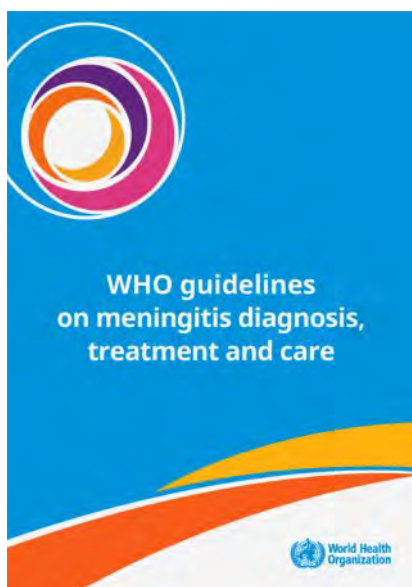
A selection of other news

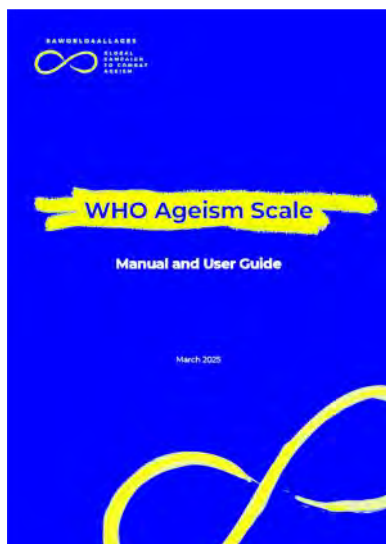
- In recent months, **WHO has made several calls for urgent action to address the disruptions in key health services due to abrupt cuts in foreign aid investment**, e.g. for essential HIV services and for tuberculosis programmes – these cuts endanger millions of lives. On **World Tuberculosis Day** on 24 March, under the theme **Yes! We Can End TB: Commit, Invest, Deliver**, WHO called for urgent investment of resources to help those in need as TB remains the world's deadliest infectious disease.
- On 6 March, **WHO designated the Digital Ethics Centre at Delft University of Technology** in the Netherlands as a **WHO Collaborating Centre on artificial intelligence (AI)** for health governance. AI has the potential to re-shape health care, save lives and improve health and well-being. However, **harnessing its benefits for good requires collaboration from stakeholders committed to robust governance, ethical safeguards, and evidence-based policies**.
- In March, measles hit the headlines. In 2024, **127 350 cases of measles were reported in the European Region, double the number reported for 2023** and the highest number seen in the Region since 1997. More than half of the reported cases from 53 countries in Europe and central Asia required hospitalization, with 38 deaths reported. **Children under 5 years of age accounted for more than 40% of the reported cases**. Vaccination rates in many countries are yet to return to pre-pandemic levels, increasing the risk of outbreaks. On 11 March, WHO received a report from the **International Health Regulation National Focal Point of the United States of America on an ongoing measles outbreak in the country**. From 1 January to 20 March 2025, **17 States reported 378 cases of measles, including 2 deaths**. The majority of cases are in children who are unvaccinated or have unknown vaccination status. Measles was declared eliminated in the USA in 2000 but since then imported cases have been detected as the disease remains endemic in many parts of the world.
- On 17 March, more than **47 million health professionals, patients, advocates, representatives from civil society organizations and individuals worldwide signed a resounding call for urgent action to reduce air pollution** and to protect people's health from its devastating impacts. This global call to action, **spearheaded by WHO** and international health organizations, was presented at the **Second Global Conference on Air Pollution and Health**, which took place in Cartagena, Colombia, on 25–27 March.
<https://www.who.int/news-room/events/detail/2025/03/25/default-calendar/second-global-conference-on-air-pollution-and-health>
- On 20 March, during the annual **Partnership for Healthy Cities Summit in Paris**, three cities were recognized for their achievements in preventing non-communicable diseases and injuries:
Córdoba, Argentina;
Fortaleza, Brazil; and **Greater Manchester, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland**.
<https://cities4health.org/>. The Summit was co-hosted by Bloomberg Philanthropies, WHO, Vital Strategies and the City of Paris, and convened mayors and officials from 61 cities in the Partnership for Healthy Cities network to address pressing public health issues and share effective strategies for saving lives and building healthier communities at the local level.
- On 25 March, WHO launched **New WHO guidance calling for urgent transformation of mental health policies**.
<https://www.who.int/news/item/25-03-2025-new-who-guidance-calls-for-urgent-transformation-of-mental-health-policies>. **Mental health services worldwide remain underfunded, with major gaps in access and quality**. In some countries, 90% of people with severe mental health conditions receive no care at all, while many existing services rely on outdated institutional models that fail to meet international human rights standards.





- On 2–3 April, **WHO convened more than 15 countries and over 20 regional health agencies, health emergency networks and other partners to test, for the first time, a new global coordination mechanism for health emergencies.** The two-day simulation, **Exercise Polaris**, tested WHO's **Global Health Emergency Corps (GHEC)**, (<https://www.who.int/emergencies/partners/global-health-emergency-corps>) a framework designed to strengthen countries' emergency workforce, coordinate the deployment of surge teams and experts, and enhance collaboration between countries. **The exercise simulated an outbreak of a fictional virus spreading across the world.**
- On 10 April, WHO published its first-ever ***Global guidelines for meningitis diagnosis, treatment and care***, aiming to speed up detection, ensure timely treatment, and improve long-term care for those affected.
<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240108042>
- Some good news appeared on 16 April as **WHO Member States concluded negotiations**, after 13 formal rounds of meetings and many informal negotiations during the past three years, on a **draft pandemic agreement**. The proposal aims to strengthen global collaboration on prevention, preparedness and response to future pandemic threats. The principles of state sovereignty, human rights, international humanitarian law, equity, solidarity and of basing public health decisions on science and evidence are integral to the agreement. As indicated above, **the draft agreement will be considered at the 78th World Health Assembly.**
- On 24 April, during **World Immunization Week**, 24–30 April, WHO, UNICEF and Gavi **warned that immunization efforts are under growing threat as misinformation, population growth, humanitarian crises and funding cuts jeopardize progress** and leave millions at risk. Outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases such as measles, meningitis and yellow fever are rising globally, and diseases like diphtheria are at risk of re-emerging. The agencies called for sustained investments in immunization efforts.
- Also on 24 April, **World Malaria Day**, WHO called for revitalized efforts at all levels, from global policy to community action, **to accelerate progress towards malaria elimination.**
- On 28 April, WHO organized a **webinar on the new WHO Ageism Scale** – a set of metrics designed to monitor ageism levels worldwide, illuminate its drivers and consequences, and evaluate the impact of interventions to reduce ageism. **This first-of-its-kind tool, developed for the WHO Global Campaign to Combat Ageism**, <https://www.aworld4allages.org/>, marks a





significant step forward in the global effort to take action to combat ageism and create #AWorld4AllAges. **Ageism is how we think (stereotypes), feel (prejudices), and act (discrimination) towards others or ourselves**

based on age, and is harmful to our health and well-being. <https://www.aworld4allages.org/>

- Also on 28 April, the WHO-coordinated **Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network (GOARN)** (<https://goarn.who.int/>) celebrated its 25th anniversary. Since its inception in April 2000, **the network has been at the forefront of the global fight against health emergencies**. By leveraging the expertise of global partners – facilitating alerts, deploying rapid support capacities, and strengthening capacities – **it has significantly enhanced country-level operations and strengthened regional development**, playing a critical role in health preparedness and response.
- On 6 May, WHO issued a new **World report on social determinants of health equity** which shows that such determinants can be responsible for a dramatic reduction of healthy life expectancy – sometimes by decades – in high- and low-income countries alike. For example, **people in the country with the lowest**



life expectancy will, on average, live 33 years less than those born in the country with the highest life expectancy. The social determinants of health equity can influence people's health outcomes more than genetic

influences or access to health care.

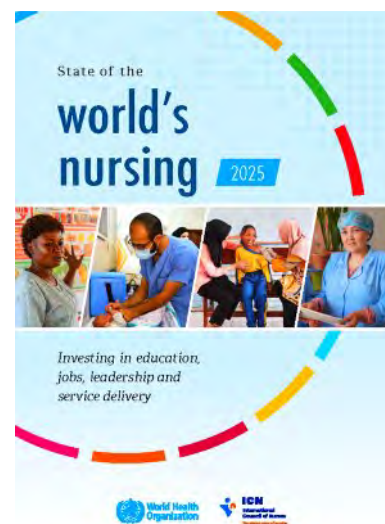
<https://www.who.int/teams/social-determinants-of-health/equity-and-health/world-report-on-social-determinants-of-health-equity>

- On 9 May, **WHO and the Medicines Patent Pool (MPP) announced a sublicensing agreement between MPP and a Nigerian health technology company – Codix Bio – to start development and manufacturing of rapid diagnostic tests** using technology transferred from a global in-vitro diagnostics company – SD Biosensor (SDB). This agreement will contribute to advancing equitable access to vital diagnostic tools through local production, **expanding manufacturing capacity in the African Region.**

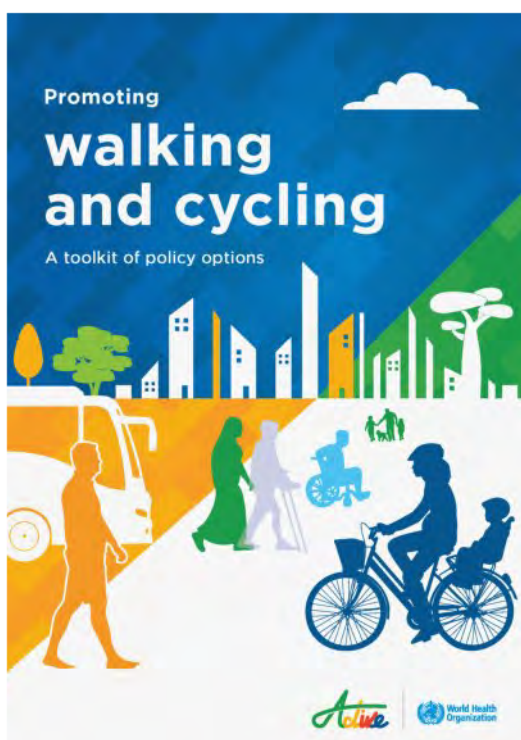
<https://medicinespatentpool.org/licence-post/rapid-diagnostic-testing-rdt-technology>

- On **International Nurses Day** on 12 May (the date commemorates the birth anniversary of Florence Nightingale), the theme was **“Caring for nurses strengthens economies”**, WHO, the International Council of Nurses and partners published the **State of the World's Nursing 2025** report which shows that, despite the global nursing workforce having grown from 27.9 million in 2018 to 29.8 million in 2023, **wide disparities in the availability of nurses remain across regions and countries** and leave many of the world's population without access to essential health services.

<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240110236/>



- Also on 12 May, ahead of the World Health Assembly, WHO issued its **Results Report 2024** (<https://www.who.int/about/accountability/resu/who-results-report-2024-2025>) which shows progress on global health goals, even in times of growing financial uncertainties. **The report presents a mid-term assessment of WHO's performance in implementing the Programme budget 2024–2025**, highlighting the Organization's work in over 150 countries and territories, **and provides an update on the implementation of the Thirteenth General Programme of Work**, showcasing both the achievements so far and challenges ahead.



- 12–18 May was the 8th **UN Global Road Safety Week** under the theme “**Make walking and cycling safe**”. WHO launched prior to the start of the week a new toolkit to help governments promote active mobility – by making it safer. **Each year, nearly 1.2 million people lose their lives on the roads, more than a quarter of them while walking or cycling.** Yet, only 0.2% of the roads worldwide are equipped with cycle lanes, and far too many communities lack basics like sidewalks or safe pedestrian crossings. <https://www.who.int/campaigns/un-global-road-safety-week/8th-un-global-road-safety-week>



- On 15 May, WHO published its **World health statistics report 2025**, revealing the deeper health impacts caused by the **COVID-19 pandemic on loss of lives, longevity and overall health and well-being**. In just two years, between 2019 and 2021, global life expectancy fell by 1.8 years – the largest drop in recent history – reversing a decade of health gains. Increased levels of anxiety and depression linked to COVID-19 reduced global healthy life expectancy by 6 weeks – erasing most of the gains made from lower mortality due to noncommunicable diseases during the same period. <https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/381418/9789240110496-eng.pdf?sequence=1>

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

Sue Block Tyrrell

NEWS FROM FORMER WHO STAFF MEMBERS' ASSOCIATIONS AROUND THE WORLD

News from the Global AFSMs

Meetings of the Global Council of AFSMs address Health Insurance

AFSM-HQ: As reported in the previous issue of *Quarterly News*, the Global Council did attempt to organize a special session on WHO Health Insurance (SHI), originally scheduled for around February 2025. Unfortunately, the pressure of work in SHI and the unavailability of some senior staff made it impossible to hold this session.

The good news is that the 8th meeting of the Global Council of AFSMs will be organized by Hanaa Ghoneim, the President of AFSM-EMR in Cairo. We agreed that it would be almost entirely devoted to health insurance issues. The seven Associations will jointly prepare a set of questions for SHI, focusing on policy issues. Ann Van Hulle-Colbert and Alejandro Henning, both AFSM-HQ members and the elected retiree representatives on the SHI Global Oversight Committee (GOC), will also participate in the meeting.

We will report on this in the next issue of the *Quarterly News*.

Jean-Paul Menu and Sue Block Tyrrell

Regional reports

WHO Retirees' Representatives in Scandinavia (AFSM-EUR): On 12 March 2025, the Association of Former Staff Members of the WHO European Region (AFSM-EUR) received official confirmation from the Danish Business Authority of its recognition as a non-profit association in Denmark. The decision to establish AFSM-EURO as a non-profit association, independent from the WHO Regional Office for Europe in Copenhagen, will ensure AFSM-EUR's financial autonomy.



AFSM-EUR carried out a pilot educational outreach project with a group of nursing students, on a study tour from the Hochschule Jena University of Applied Sciences in Germany (shown in the photo), with a visit to the UN City in Copenhagen on Thursday, 15 May 2025. The group was keen to learn about the World Health Organization, including milestones achieved in its 77-year history, as well as current global guidelines and regional competencies for nurses working in primary health care.

Our Association continues to host a *Monthly Meet-up* for former staff on the first Wednesday of every month.

AFSM-EUR plans to schedule a meeting with the Regional Director to explore ideas for supporting the Regional Office for Europe, for example, by establishing a pool of former staff volunteers, who could be assigned specific duties, such as meet and greet, event registration and healthy break support.

Melodie Karlson and **Sharon Miller**

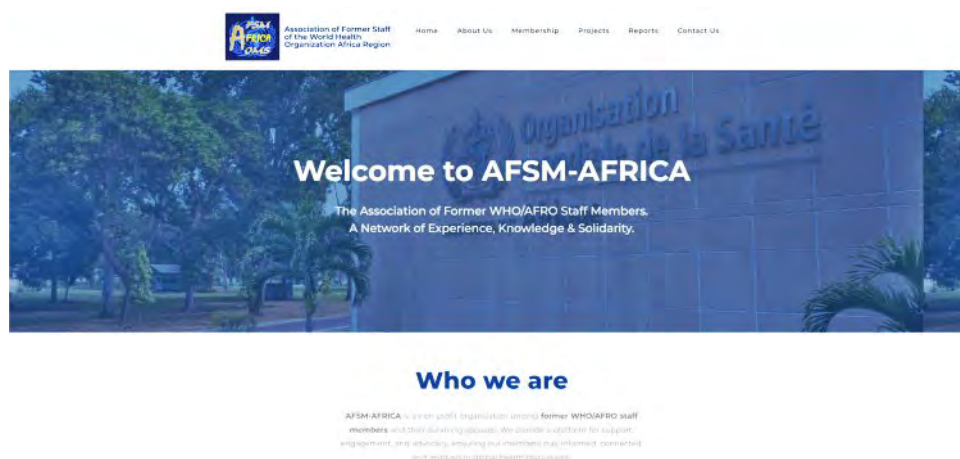
AFSM-Africa: AFRO Retired but Not Tired: Highlights of news from AFSM-Africa – May 2025

1) Strengthening our Collaboration with the Regional Office AFRO

The 4th General Assembly of AFSM-Africa, held virtually on 31 August 2024, marked a milestone in our institutional collaboration with the WHO Regional Office for Africa (AFRO), formalized on 31 July 2024. Although progress slowed due to the sudden passing of Dr Faustine Ndugulile (Tanzania), elected Regional Director in August 2024, the election of his successor, Dr Mohamed Yakub Janabi, in May 2025 brings renewed momentum. AFSM remains committed to advancing this vital partnership.

2) New Website Launch

In May 2025, the Executive Committee proudly launched the official AFSM-Africa website: www.afsmafrica.org. This modern platform enhances visibility, connectivity, and access to key initiatives.



3) Engagement During the Decade of Healthy Ageing

As the Decade Action Plan continues to take shape under Angela Benson's leadership, our members are already leading impactful efforts across Africa:

- In **Niger**, **Hon. Mamoudou Harouna Djingarey** was appointed to lead the National Dialogue and currently chairs the National Consultative Council – guiding the nation's democratic renewal.
- In **Mozambique**, **Dr Angélica Salomão** made history as the first Lusophone woman elected Governor of Rotary District 9400, founded in 1972.

4) Coming Soon

The editorial team of our collective of former international civil servants is finalizing the French edition of their publication – scheduled for release in July 2025.

Stay connected as AFSM-Africa continues to elevate the voice and impact of senior professionals in global public health.

Kalula Kalambay President AFSM-Africa

Solange Kouo Epa Secretary AFSM-Africa

AFSM-PAHO/AMR: News from the Americas. As one would expect, a high degree of uncertainty prevails in the region. US funding for WHO has been cut (hence proportionally affecting AMRO), but the budget component through the interamerican system (PAHO) is still undefined. If that too is reduced a major contraction of PAHO/AMRO will need to take place. This does not affect former staff, but the number of retirees will be considerably diminished in the future, and we worry about our institution.

On a more uplifting note, we had our first Spring Luncheon since pre-Covid times (2019), with almost 50 participants, and a program covering the usual SHI and Credit Union presentations, as well as the new issue of changes in the US residency laws for those retiring staff wishing to stay in the US. Converting a regular International Civil Service visa into a residence permit – which used to be almost automatic – can now take up to 15 years! This will certainly affect future retirees.

This news notwithstanding, we had a most enjoyable time, and it was a real pleasure to share time, memories, health issues, and grandchildren stories with old friends that had not been seen in person for far too long.



We look forward to the next meeting of the Global Council of AFSMs to exchange views on likely scenarios for WHO.

Hernán Rosenberg President AFSM-PAHO/AMR

AFSM-SEAR: Our Association continued with its constitutional duties in the support and welfare of the members.

One of the main tasks that we focussed on during this quarter was to reach out and ensure that our retired colleagues and/or surviving beneficiaries submitted the 2024 Certificate of Entitlement immediately, as these were listed for suspension of pension payments. We feel confident and satisfied that we helped them avoid this unpleasant situation.

AFSM-SEAR is currently in the process of updating and revising its Constitution to reflect and respond to the current situation and changing needs. The other important statutory obligation is the registration of the Association as required by prevailing national laws.

We continue to strive to engage the SEAR Administration into institutionalisation of AFSM with an MOU. The efforts are ongoing; however, the Administration has now been plunged into dealing with the more pressing current financial situation.

We stand in solidarity with the Organization and look forward to a better horizon emerging. We are confident that the Organization will emerge steadfast with its mandated goals for the betterment of peoples' health.

M.R. Kanaga Rajan President AFSM-SEAR

UNIAG – UNITED NATIONS INTER-AGENCY GAMES – 2025

50th UN Inter-Agency Games, held on 14–18 May 2025 at Rennes, Brittany, France.

The Inter-Agency Games, hosted this year by UNESCO, celebrated its 50th annual edition in the town of Rennes, the capital of Brittany. It brought together some 1300 UN staff and retirees of 120 nationalities from 67 agencies and missions in duty stations scattered around the world.



Rennes is an attractive modern city which has developed into one of the main French centres in telecommunications and high-tech industry, including digital innovation. Its population of 700,000 is divided roughly between the urban centre and the surrounding rural districts (i.e. behind a green belt). Frequently the host to artistic and cultural events, Rennes is increasingly attracting major sports events, with three sports hubs circling the city at which the UN Games

were played. It is also noteworthy for its concentration of universities and higher education institutions (ENS) which attract some 70,000 students, providing a young and dynamic atmosphere to the city.

There seems to be an increasing plethora of sports in which to compete at the Games, ranging from the traditional athletics, football, table tennis, volleyball, chess, etc., to the newer cricket, padel tennis, swimming, beach volleyball, pool billiards, and demonstrations of blind pétanque and pickleball. Several of the 17 disciplines are enhanced by both separate and mixed men and women competitions. The popular and raucous mixed darts tournament is the only discipline allowing (indeed demanding) consumption of beer and wine during the matches.

WHO's participation, including IARC, UNITAID and UNICC, comprised 65 players from duty stations such as Abuja & Minna in Nigeria, Brazzaville, Luanda, Maputo, Kabul, Lyon, Geneva, Kigali, Quetta in Pakistan, Addis Ababa and Valencia. These contributed to three 1st place finishes, in Athletics (men), Swimming (women), and Volleyball (men); two 2nd places, in Basketball, and Swimming (men); and a 3rd place in Beach Volleyball.

In my chess tournament of 6 teams of 5 players each, we reached the final 5th round with 4 teams competing for the first 3 places. IAEA had secured 1st place but was surprisingly defeated by UNESCO which thereby finished 2nd, leaving my UN Geneva team to fight it out with UNECE-ITC. We drew our match, but UNECE-ITC edged ahead based on individual points (as against match points). So, 4th again just like last year. Most frustrating. In a nice informal conclusion, however, UNESCO had invited a young French grandmaster to play a “*simultaneous*” against our 20 best players (he walked around the room playing one move at a time on each board). It gave me some satisfaction to be the last to succumb in an exciting game.



The WHO Women's Swimming Team celebrating a triumphant 1st place at the 2025 games.

And at the massive closing ceremony on the Saturday evening, the opening speech thanked all 1,000+ participants, while calling attention to the fact that there was still one survivor from the inaugural Games at Champéry in 1971 – *yours truly*.

It was announced that next year's Games, probably in May 2026, would be organized by a Vienna agency. This does not mean that the Games will be held in Vienna, as the agency is free to choose any location.

Derrick Deane

READERS' RECIPES

Summer pudding (Serves 6)

Summer pudding is very easy to make. Cooking time less than 10 minutes, and it is best prepared the day before.



Ingredients

750 g mixed summer soft fruit, such as raspberries, strawberries, redcurrants, blackcurrants, tayberries, loganberries, blackberries, cranberries, cherries and blueberries

185 g caster (superfine) sugar

1 slightly stale loaf of good quality white bread

2 tbsp cassis or blackcurrant cordial

Recipe

You'll need a 1-litre pudding bowl and a large saucepan.

Remove the stems, stones, leaves, and hulls from the fruit. Place the fruit in a saucepan, pour the sugar over the fruit and stir gently to mix.

If time allows, cover the pan with a tea towel or cling film and leave for several hours to get the juices running. Place the pan over a moderate heat and bring gently to the boil.

While the fruit is simmering, cut the bread into medium thickness slices and remove the crusts.

When the juices are beginning to flow, raise the heat slightly and simmer for about 2–3 minutes.

Then turn off the heat and stir in the cassis or blackcurrant cordial and allow to cool.

Dip one side of the bread slices in the pan containing the fruit and line the bowl completely – bottom and sides – with the bread slices overlapping, juice-side outwards.

Once the bowl is completely lined with the juice-soaked bread (be sure not to leave any gaps) spoon all the fruit and its juices into the bowl. Trim excess bread from around the edge. Cover the top of the fruit with more juiced slices of bread. Place the bowl on a plate to collect any juices.

Find a saucer that fits neatly inside the bowl. Place it upside down on top to cover the upper layer of bread, then weigh the saucer down with weights – tins of fruit, vegetables, soup, or whatever comes to hand. Let it cool, then place in the fridge overnight.

The next day, remove the weights and the saucer. Run a knife around the edge, place a shallow serving plate over the bowl and invert to turn the pudding out. Cut into thick slices and serve the summer pudding with thick cream.

A pudding-loving reader

READERS' LETTERS

The 2025 AFSM Cruise

I'm a little surprised to see this year's AFSM cruise – announced in the April issue (*QNT 139*) – as being along **the River Elbe and the River "Moldau"**. The point is that the second river runs entirely through Czechia, where it is called the Vltava, pronounced "VUL-tah-vah" (the second letter is a lower-case L, and Czech words are stressed on the first syllable).

"Moldau" is the German name and is a hangover from the time when Czechia (then still known as Bohemia) was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire (where the official language was German). There's a famous piece of music by the Czech composer Bedřich Smetana, who originally called it "*Vltava*" in his own language – but it became known internationally as "*The Moldau*". I trust the piece will be played during the cruise – perhaps even by live (Czech) musicians?

For that matter, the first of the two rivers, the Elbe, mainly runs through Germany, reaching the North Sea just beyond Hamburg – but it rises in Czechia, and is known there as the Labe.

I would have thought that in this day and age it would be more respectful for the Cruise Company to call the Vltava by its original (and present) Czech name, while explaining that some people may also know it as the Moldau.

Kevin Cook

ASTRONOMY

The skies for July–December 2025

In contrast to the beginning of the year, when the sky was full of bright planets, there is a dearth of them in the second half. Mars is still visible, following the setting Sun during July and August, although better visible in the southern hemisphere than in the northern. It is now quite distant from Earth, and is just a tiny reddish disc in a telescope.

Saturn makes an appearance over in the east from September onwards as seen from both hemispheres, but it is a strangely dim version of its usual self. This is because its ring system is almost edge-on to us, an appearance that occurs every 15 years or so. You can pick it out from the stars because it hardly twinkles at all. This is because it has a globe, rather than being a point of light. The Moon is close to it on 8 September, 5 October and 1 and 2 November.

By Christmas, brilliant Jupiter becomes visible, rising in the south-east in the northern hemisphere and the north-east in the southern, although later at night.

For more information about what is in the sky, take a look at the Society for Popular Astronomy's website, popastro.com.

Article kindly provided by the British Society for Popular Astronomy

All articles in this series refer to the global situation unless stated otherwise. Terms such as midnight refer to midnight local solar time. The solar time for your site may differ from the actual clock time.

IN MEMORIAM

Recent deaths¹ of former WHO staff members as reported to AFSM

Allam	Nabila Mohamed	16 Jan 25	Khalifa	Sylviane E	02 Feb 25
Amedee	Marie Ange	22 Mar 25	Khosh-Chashm	Kaiumars	19 Mar 25
Azizur Rahman	A B M	29 Dec 24	Kulfas	Manuel	15 Feb 25
Azouma	Atamon	18 Feb 25	Lynch	I	22 Jan 25
Bent	Vernon Washington	09 Aug 24	Mahmod	Normah	07 Dec 24
Biellik	Robin J	07 Dec 24	Matute	Garcia J	19 Feb 25
Buumba	Della Chinkoyo	26 Nov 24	Nachbauer	Nicolle M H	17 Jan 25
Campanini	Barbara B	14 Feb 25	Nantier	Helen Mary	29 Dec 24
Cathy	Edmond Hubert	20 Dec 24	Opoku	Anthony Kofi	05 Jan 25
Cohen	David	22 Jan 25	Osuagwu	Ngozi	21 Dec 24
Curtet	Josette	11 Dec 24	Oyedeki	Rasaq Gbolagade	27 Dec 24
Diarra	Tieman	05 Feb 25	Pascual	Ricardo	30 Jan 25
Ewart	Steven S	08 Jan 25	Pienvichitr	Vithya	20 Dec 24
Ferraro	Nicole	06 Feb 25	Sanchez Claros	Humber	09 Dec 24
Gonzalez	L	06 Aug 24	Schaumburg	Alice	31 Jan 25
Icaza	Susana	01 Nov 24	Shahi	Rajendra	23 Dec 24
Ijil	Yam Kwam	11 Jan 25	Shehu	Umaru	02 Oct 23
Ilunga	Bitokwela	13 Dec 24	Sherif	Mary Z	27 Feb 25
Iyer	Duraiswamy Suryanar	03 Jan 25	Sommerfeld	Johannes Ulrich	19 Feb 25
Jorgensen	Otto H	04 Mar 25	Tortosa Segura	Hilario	23 Jan 25
Joseph	Fitzroy G	25 Dec 24	Towa	Julienne	02 Jan 25
Jovanovski-Dasic	Mira	19 Nov 24	Zala	Eugenie	14 Jan 25

The deaths were also announced of the survivors of former staff members: Attia, Joseph George; Baron, Christopher; Cerutti, Simone; Chawla, Sarla; Dailly, Pierre; De Cervantes, Gloria; Dutrenit, Raquel; Elhassan, Afaf Osman; Guest, Ilse; Kakar, Suresh Chandra; Kokou, Awusi; Nang, Phay; Nielsen, Annalise; Otouonoue, Veronique; Ouedraogo, Edith; Peterschmitt, Jean Claude; Shah, Bhinda Swari; Silva Velazquez, Gladis Boemi; Soliman, Galila Hassen; Sore, Mariam Guigma; Tokish, Bimla; Tonn, Sigrid; Wijeyaratne, Anoma M.

¹ The present notification of deaths was gratefully received from UNJSPF and covers Q1 2025. 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.

**Steven Summers Ewart, born 7 January 1950 in Radford, Virginia, USA,
died 8 January 2025 in Geneva, Switzerland**



Steven Ewart passed away the day after his 75th birthday. Steve started painting at 10 years old and eventually studied art, becoming a master silk-screen printer. He enjoyed the medium of silkscreen because he could produce multiple copies of the same image. This made his art

more accessible to a larger audience. As an Art Director in New York City, he worked closely with Andy Warhol and produced several of the artist's famous silk-screen images.

When his wife Leslie was transferred from UNHQ to ESCWA in Beirut in 1981, Steve went with her and was recruited as a book designer by a local book publisher. In 1982 the family had to be emergency evacuated from Beirut, losing all their belongings.

Leslie was recruited for a post at WHO in Geneva, a city where Steve held several exhibitions of his art. When the position of Head of Graphic Design and Layout (GRA) became vacant in 1985, Steve was offered the post on condition that his wife resign

her WHO post, because in those days WHO did not permit the simultaneous employment of spouses.

Steve enjoyed his work at WHO, especially the book design. He introduced Apple computers to GRA, which greatly facilitated time-consuming manual work. Under Steve, the Graphics unit was awarded two prizes by the British Medical Association for outstanding medical book design.

He also enjoyed hosting, along with the Printing Service (PRT, their inseparable neighbours), the Annual Graphics and Print Christmas Party to which everyone in the Organization was invited.

After retirement in 2010, Steve devoted himself to making art. He worked primarily on his computer and had his images printed on demand. He loved spending winters in Thailand, reading, visiting temples and beaches and enjoying Thai food and humour and photographing people.

Steve is survived by his wife Leslie, daughter Courtney and son James, his grandchildren Max and Gigi, as well as his three brothers and a sister. He is so very much missed, his humour, insights, companionship and kindness.

Leslie Ewart

Steve was a very creative and generous person, and great fun to work with. We were lucky to have him in charge during the introduction of computers. He was very keen to understand how they worked and what they could do, and the rest of us benefited from everything he learnt. Only GRA had Macintosh computers, and we were on our own from a support point of view. His early silkscreens are still very fresh (I have one on the wall beside me in my studio) thanks to his keen eye for colour. His post-retirement works are charming for the same reason. He was a good friend, and he is missed.

Sue Hobbs, GRA, 1986–1998.

I miss Steve; he and I worked in adjacent offices for over 20 years. He ran the graphic design unit, and I headed up the printing unit, organizing external procurement of WHO publications, we worked hard but had a lot of fun doing so. Between us, and with the support of our unit colleagues, we sought to provide an efficient and friendly one-stop service for all the Organization's publishing needs. This close synergy created some confusion among our many WHO users, and even some of our supervisors. Everyone knew what the two units did, but few seemed able to recall which one of us ran which unit. Even one of our directors would call us both in and ask, "*Now, who does design?*".

Keith Wynn

Steve was a founder member of the infamous lunch table which outsiders joined at their peril! His remarks could be amongst the most acerbic, but it was all given and taken in good fun. After our respective retirements, Keith, Steve and I used to meet up at our favourite Thai restaurant where the booking would always be in the name of "*Mr Steve*". We had many interesting chats and had hoped to meet up again after a long break. Carol and I send our sincere condolences to Leslie, Jamie and Courtney.

Richard Saynor

SUBMISSION OF OBITUARIES

Editorial policy on the submission of obituaries. As you know the Association publishes the obituaries of former WHO staff members in the *Quarterly News*. The Editorial Board reviews the obituaries received with a view to suitability for publication. Obituaries should not exceed 300 words and be submitted along with a good quality photo of the subject of the obituary. Unless it follows the wishes of the deceased or their family, consider not revealing the cause of death. The date and country of death are required, and the date of birth if known.

The Editorial Board

ART EXHIBITION IN LAUSANNE, SWITZERLAND

Vallotton Forever. The Retrospective**CANTONAL MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, LAUSANNE**

24 October 2025 — 15 February 2026

The museum is open every day except Monday.

<https://www.mcba.ch/en/exhibitions/vallotton-forever/>

This year, Switzerland commemorates the centenary of Félix Vallotton's death. Publications and exhibitions are planned in several Swiss cities for the occasion. Exhibitions are organized at the Jenisch Museum in Vevey, the Kunst Museum in Winterthur, the Museo Castello San Materno in Ascona, and the Cantonal Museum of Fine Arts in Lausanne.

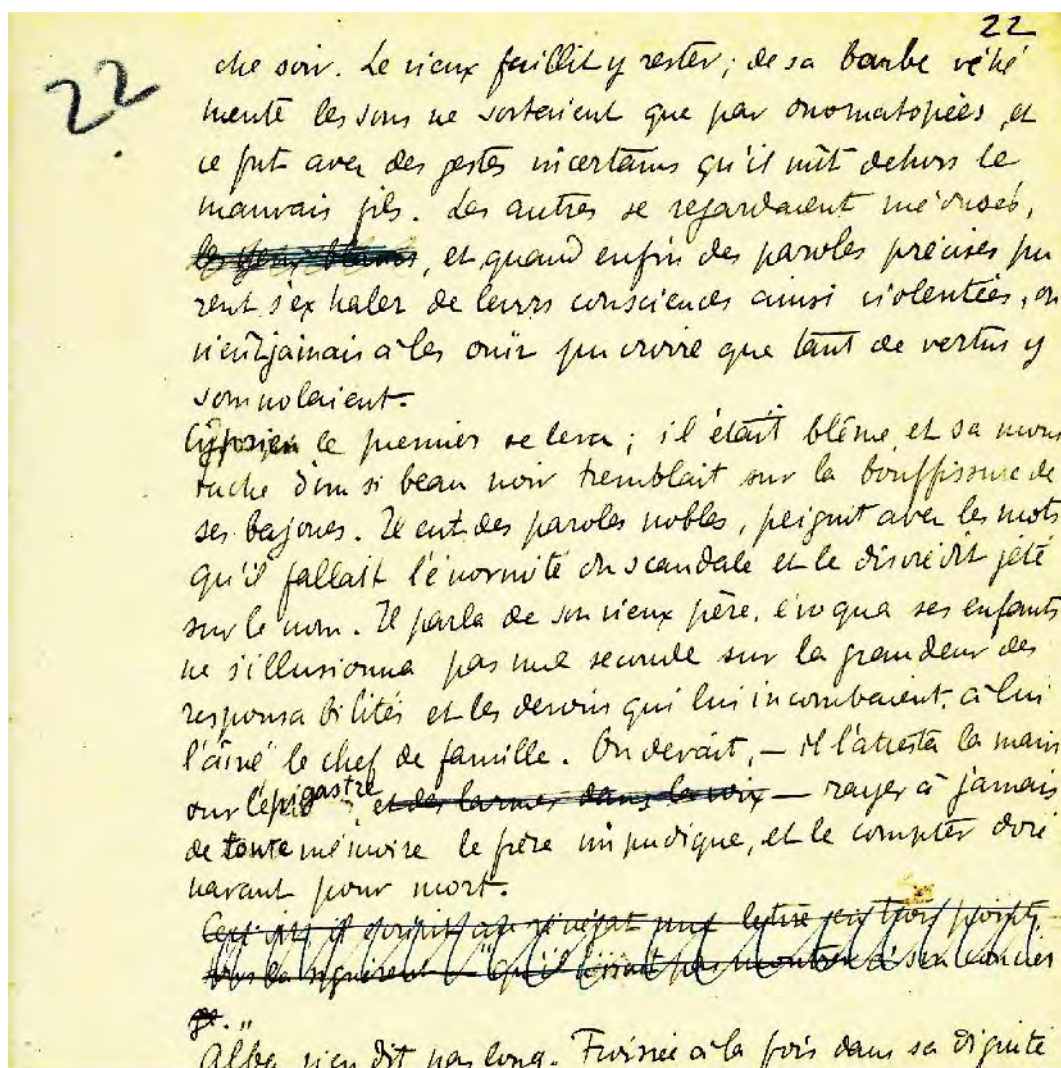
Each in its own way reveals the multiple facets of Vallotton's art. He had a very complex personality. While the Swiss artist is world-famous for his paintings, he is less so for his novels and plays. We are referring to an extraordinary figure. Before reviewing his works, a brief portrait of Vallotton the man is necessary. He was born in Lausanne in 1865 into a bourgeois family, which he left at the age of 16 for Paris, where he spent his entire career until his death in 1925. He was a very ambitious person. He studied at the Academy of Fine Arts, becoming friends with the painters of the “*Nabi*” movement, which he joined.

Over time, he began to become well-known. His output was considerable. Vallotton became famous during his lifetime. There are 1,704 listed paintings; 300 are held in museums around the world and 177 in 23 Swiss museums. But there are also countless woodcuts, magazine and book illustrations, and designs for printing. While his painting quickly made him famous in France, it was his printmaking that brought him international recognition. With their flat black and white colours, Vallotton imagined a new art form that he then transposed into his drawings and illustrations for printing. Along with Giacometti, Vallotton is the most famous Swiss artist in the world. More famous even than his compatriots Hodler and Anker.

Few people realize that he was also a novelist and playwright. A revelation, then, in this year of celebrations. And further proof of the genius of this tormented man, who used every cultural means at his disposal to shake off his anguish. He wrote three novels, published after his death: *La vie meurtrière*, *Les soupirs de Cyprien Morus*, and *Corbehaut*. Vallotton also wrote six plays, so far unpublished, and authored numerous sketches. These collected works will be published in a 1,200-page book due to be released by *Éditions ZOE* (Genève) in October 2025.

Among the exhibitions dedicated to him, we have chosen to highlight the most important, that of the Cantonal Museum of Fine Arts in Lausanne (MCBA). The MCBA houses the world's largest collection of the artist's works, and, with the Félix Vallotton Foundation, a documentation and research center, are presenting a major retrospective in Lausanne, his native city, dedicated to Félix Vallotton (1865–1925) to mark the centenary of his death.

The retrospective brings together more than 200 of the most important works in public and private collections in Switzerland and Europe. This exhibition is not to discover Félix Vallotton, instead visitors are invited to discover a unique approach to his work, enlightened by recent research conducted in Lausanne.



A handwritten folio from one of Félix Vallotton's many written works.

Photo: © Cantonal Museum of Fine Arts of Lausanne

The first part of the exhibition focuses on Vallotton's prolific efforts to establish himself on the Parisian art scene during the 1880s to the 1900s. Paintings, woodcuts, book illustrations, and press cartoons constitute the workings of a coherent strategy, both in terms of aesthetic and political positioning and his position in the art market. During the 1890s, as part of the *Nabi* group, he established a place for himself among the artists, critics, and collectors who gravitated around *La Revue Blanche*. His illustrations and satirical drawings for politically engaged newspapers made his voice heard in the major social debates of the time. He stood out from his contemporaries for his satirical verve and fiery colours.

The second part of the exhibition is devoted to the revolution that took place in Vallotton's life and work at the turn of the 20th century. The artist turned away from the hustle and bustle of modern life to immerse himself in a melancholy that characterized his temperament. He almost entirely abandoned engraving and illustration to devote himself fully and freely to painting. He nevertheless remained present on the contemporary art scene, where his appearances were eagerly awaited at the Salons. Renewing the dialogue he had opened in his early youth with the great tradition, Vallotton now confronted his illustrious predecessors: Holbein for portraits, Ingres and Manet for nudes, and Poussin for landscapes. It was then that landscapes, portraits, nudes, and mythological subjects emerged, which, as the exhibition demonstrates, constitute Vallotton's decisive contribution to modernity.

Laura Ciaffei



Félix Vallotton **"The Chaste Susanna"**, 1922. Oil on canvas, 54 x 73 cm. MCBA collection

Photo: © Cantonal Museum of Fine Arts of Lausanne



Félix Vallotton, **"Five o'clock"**, 1898. Tempera on cardboard, 35.6 x 58.2 cm. Private collection.

Photo: © MCBA All rights reserved



General Assembly, 6 October 2025

Executive Committee Report

November 2023 – October 2025

1. Introduction

The biennium under review has been rich in activities both continued and new ones. We continued to conduct our regular monthly meetings in hybrid mode, thanks to the kind support of the WHO Administration. We pay a special tribute to Laurent Calissi from the Videoconferencing Services; he was always of great help and very sadly passed away suddenly on 11 August 2024.

The decision of the President of the United States of America to withdraw from WHO forced the Organization to consider severe budget cuts. Our Association conveyed messages of solidarity and an offer of our help as required. AFSM also sent a token contribution of 913 CHF (corresponding to one CHF per member) to the WHO Foundation, in line with its *One Dollar, One World* campaign. See also section 6.1 of this report regarding our proposal to reduce the costs of AFSM's Quarterly News to the Organization.

We have been saddened by the deaths of several members and honorary members of our Committee: Yves Beigbeder (November 2023), Maria Dweggah and Alain Vessereau (January 2024), and David Cohen (January 2025).

As at end May 2025, we had 911 members (893 life members and 18 annual members). Since October 2023, 71 former staff joined the Association.

2. Elections of the Executive Committee

In October 2024 we renewed our Executive Committee. As in 2022 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 studied the situation: Jeanne Schmid-Ryan kindly withdrew her candidature in the interest of the Association, to avoid a long and costly election process and she was later coopted.

The composition of the Bureau members of the Committee from October 2024–October 2026 is therefore as follows:

- Co-Presidents: Sue Block Tyrrell, Robert Bos and Jean-Paul Menu
- Treasurer: Anne Yamada
- Assistant Treasurer: Keith Wynn
- Administrator: Michèle Bernard Evans

The other members of the Executive Committee are: Laura Ciaffei, Barbara Fontaine, Edmond Mobio, Dev Ray, Ambi Sundaram, Ann Van Hulle-Colbert, and Jeanne Schmid-Ryan (coopted). They were assisted by David Cohen, Honorary President until his passing away in January 2025.

The Committee members share the responsibilities for different activities, notably:

- Health insurance matters: Ann Van Hulle-Colbert
- WHO Staff Pension Committee: Barbara Fontaine and Edmond Mobio (observers)
- *Quarterly News*: Keith Wynn, Editor-in-chief, with Sue Block Tyrrell, David Cohen (†), Catherine d’Arcangues, Barbara Fontaine, Lindsay Martinez, Jean-Paul Menu, Dev Ray and Rosemary Villars on the Editorial Board
- Focal point for WHO’s Healthy Ageing programme: Robert Bos

3. Relations with the Director-General

Our relations with the Director-General and his office have remained exceptional and Dr Tedros continues to be very supportive of our Association. When giving statements at our meetings or new year messages in our *Quarterly News*, he always quotes his slogan “Once WHO, Always WHO” and he refers to us as his “senior interns”.

We have greatly appreciated our collaboration with Dr Shenaaz El-Halabi, Director in the DG’s Office, who was our focal point until her move to take on the role of WHO Representative in South Africa. Giselle von Guillaume and Hilda Muriuki in DGO are helping us pending the nomination of our new focal point in DGO. Our overall focal point at headquarters is the Director of Human Resources and Talent Management, referred to in item 4 below.

Dr Tedros continues to be very pleased with our collaboration with our sister associations in the Regional Offices and has provided his support for greater recognition of and collaboration with the Regional AFSMs. In February 2024 he wrote to all the Regional Directors to request their support to the Regional AFSMs, and he invited them to join him at the opening of the meeting of the Global Council of AFSMs held in Geneva on the Saturday before the World Health Assembly in May 2024. DGO covered the cost for one representative from each Regional AFSM to come to Geneva for the meeting of the Council and to attend the first day of the Assembly. Further details of the Global Council are contained in item 9 below.

Obviously, the WHO budget cuts and the resulting reduction in force are having their impact, including on no face-to-face Global Council meeting in May 2025. As indicated

above, we have conveyed our deep sadness to the Director-General and our solidarity with the staff and have offered our support wherever possible.

The AFSM continued to have a reserved seat at the World Health Assembly sessions in 2024 and 2025 and our representatives attended the meetings.

4. Relations with the WHO Administration

We have continued to enjoy excellent relations with the WHO Administration, especially all the teams involved in the printing and distribution of the *Quarterly News* (see item 6.1 below); the Staff Health Insurance team (item 8); the Pension team (item 7); the Staff Health and Welfare service, notably regarding influenza vaccinations (item 5); the Staff Counsellor for participation in the WHO pre-retirement seminars (item 6.6) and for advice and help as needed; the Global Service Centre and the IT team at HQ; the teams dealing with meeting room reservations and videoconferencing who have helped us on so many occasions; the team working on the Decade of Healthy Ageing (item 5); the communications team (item 5); the team at the main HQ reception desk and the security team whose members have also helped us on many occasions; the archives team; the teams dealing with the WHO website and Sharepoint (item 6.2); the interpretation team; and many other teams whose members willingly support us when needed.

At the time of writing, we understand that offices in the L and M buildings will be moved into the old main building (building A) or the new building (building B). We have requested that our office remains close to the Staff Association office, which greatly facilitates our collaboration (item 10). We have very much appreciated our collaboration with Bruce Leech and his Infrastructure Support and Services team, who kindly arranged for visits by interested local AFSM members to see the progress of the A building renovations.

As mentioned above, our overall focal point at HQ is the Director of Human Resources and Talent Management (HRT). We were very grateful to Jennifer Linkins who held this position until March 2024. Jen was most helpful in arranging the DG's message to the Regional Directors requesting their support for the Regional AFSMs (see item 9 below). After Jen's departure, pending the appointment of the new Director HRT Patrick Nicollier who took up the position in January 2025, our focal point was Patrick Cronin, Director HRT a.i., who has also been very supportive, and we thank him for his collaboration. Thanks to Patrick Cronin, we were able to work with the communications team to post on the HQ intranet information about the AFSM to encourage those about to leave the Organization to join our Association. We look forward to our collaboration with Patrick Nicollier.

Whenever requested, we continued to help the HRT team in trying to find former staff willing to accept short-term assignments. However, we learned fairly recently that a condition for former staff who held legitimation cards and wish to retire in Switzerland stipulates that they can only be accorded B or C permits without gainful employment.

Our collaboration with the editorial team of the *newSpecial* continues and their monthly magazine is shared with us for forwarding electronically to all AFSM members.

We are indeed very lucky and privileged to work in such a collaborative environment and we thank all the teams involved, and hope that our collaboration can continue in the future.

5. Collaboration with WHO programmes and healthy ageing activities

Regarding healthy ageing, during the two years under review, the AFSM continued to cooperate with **WHO's Demographic Change and Healthy Ageing Unit**, which also provides the Secretariat for the UN Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021-2030). On 25 February 2025 a webinar was organized covering the WHO Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities – this Network is one of the programmatic activities under the Unit. The 90-minute webinar was attended by over 50 AFSM members from around the world, and highlighted presentations by representatives from three Member States where affiliated programmes for age-friendly communities/cities are implemented: Australia, Ireland and the United States of America. The concept behind this global network was explained by the responsible officer, Dr Thiago Herick De Sá. A wide range of experiences was shared: in Ireland, the national programme focuses on the institutional structure for the promotion of healthy ageing at the different levels of governance; in the US the successful use of social media and other new technologies are key factors in the success of the Washington DC programme; the Australian experience showcased the various challenges one may meet in developing programmes for age-friendly communities. A lively discussion ensued in the final part of the webinar.

In addition to this specific information dissemination activity, members of our Committee attended several activities organized by platforms for healthy ageing in the Geneva area, and regular announcements and communications were made through emails and in the *Quarterly News*. One event worth recalling was a special session in connection with the gathering of the UN Human Rights Council, on 1 October 2024. Since 2010, the first of October is celebrated as the International Day of Older Persons (IDOP). At this side event, attended by ExCom representatives, the Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing (OEWGA), established by the UNGA, presented its final report and recommendations. With speakers from the UNHRC, WHO and ILO, and with contributions from several Heads of Missions to the UN and its Specialized Agencies in Geneva, it was announced that a next step would be the formulation and negotiation of a Convention on the Human Rights of Older Persons.

Finally, on 28 April 2025, the Demographic Change and Healthy Ageing Unit launched the WHO Ageism Scale, an innovative tool to measure ageism – the launching webinar was announced in a timely manner to the AFSM membership.

Our Committee intends to continue its collaboration with the WHO healthy ageing programmes at HQ and at the Regional Office level and will report on progress and events on a regular basis.

Regarding influenza vaccination, each year the **WHO Staff Health and Welfare department** set aside several days for retirees and their spouses, affiliated to the WHO Staff Health Insurance. Last year, 3 days were set aside for vaccinating retirees (21 - 23 October) in the D-UNAIDS building. In addition to online booking, a telephone hotline was set up. 107 retirees and 53 spouses were vaccinated.

6. Information and communications

The Executive Committee continues its efforts to provide information rapidly to members, mostly by email. A few Committee members have access from home to the AFSM email account which enables us to respond promptly. Telephone messages are listened to during the weekly permanences and are subsequently responded to. We encourage members to send their messages by email to afsm_aoms@who.int. Fortunately, the number of communications received by post is small as responding by post entails more response time and costs to the AFSM.

As members will understand, we have been requested by WHO to reduce to the minimum requests for printed copies of documents which also entail postage costs. Currently, we have 115 members in our database who do not have an email address or have not shared it with us. We urge you to help us respond to WHO's legitimate concerns and send us your email address as soon as possible if you have not already shared it with us.

6.1. Quarterly News

We commenced the second half of this biennium under a cloud of uncertainty, with the withdrawal of the US contribution to WHO. This has directly impacted the *Quarterly News* in 2025 because WHO has traditionally – and generously – absorbed the cost of production and postage of the newsletter on behalf of our Association.

Long before the US withdrawal of funding was announced, many appeals had been made to the membership to forego receiving the printed edition, and to read the magazine online, to reduce the AFSM cost to WHO. Following the US withdrawal, leaving WHO funding insufficient to fully provide for its own staff costs, programmes, and projects, the AFSM Committee felt unable to continue to exploit this arrangement without making a concerted effort to significantly reduce the AFSM cost to WHO. In the April issue we published a call for 500 of our members to volunteer to forego the printed edition. Regrettably, the request did not even come close to the required level of volunteers. At the May meeting of the Executive Committee the decision was taken to propose at the General Assembly that in future the magazine would be published online only, except for a handful of copies for presumably those more senior members who do not have internet access.

For the Association, the magazine represents the primary means of keeping in contact with you, enabling all of us to remain in touch with one another, and provide you with up-to-date news on pensions, health insurance, and what is happening at WHO. We all owe a big debt of gratitude to the dedicated voluntary members of the Executive Committee and Editorial Board, who follow and report on developments on our behalf. We also try to find a selection of interesting items to publish alongside the more serious articles. For these articles we would like to be able to count a lot more on you, our members, to provide articles.

The digital version of the current issue of the *Quarterly News* is always available on the AFSM web pages – hosted by WHO – several weeks before the paper edition is dispatched. The digital edition is not only published sooner, but it also contains interesting extra material that cost limitations prevent us from publishing in the printed editions. The added advantages of consulting the digital versions are many, including showing all photos in colour and at a resolution which can be enlarged on your screen, and all web-links and email addresses are directly clickable.

The archived electronic versions of past issues of the *Quarterly News* – from the first (pilot) issue published in 1989 through to the most recent – will soon become available for consultation again on a dedicated AFSM SharePoint, which is under development and will function in a similar way to the SHI-Online pages – see item 6.2 below.

6.2. Website and electronic hosting platform (SharePoint)

The project to provide electronic access to the current and all past issues of the *Quarterly News* as well as to the Directory of AFSM members is progressing well. We hope to launch the system by the last quarter of 2025. As mentioned above, once launched, the *Quarterly News* will no longer be printed and distributed (with exceptions) and access to the new system will be strictly reserved for AFSM members. More details will follow in a future edition of the *Quarterly News*.

The AFSM website www.who.int/about/former-staff (English) and www.who.int/fr/about/former-staff (French) gets updated on our request by the WHO web team and, as already mentioned, contain the most recent issues of the *Quarterly News* and other key documents, such as the AFSM Statutes and the booklet on formalities concerning the death of a WHO retiree. The site includes several links to conferences and cultural events scheduled in Geneva and nearby, as well as Associations of interest to our members.

6.3. Guide for survivors

As referred to under item 6.2 above and as reported in *Quarterly News* 136 (July 2024), our guide *Formalities concerning the death of a WHO retiree – A guide for retirees and their survivors to ensure continuity of the UN pension and of the WHO health insurance*, has been updated and can be found on our website – www.who.int/about/former-staff/resources.

6.4. Permanences and responses to members' requests

As members are aware, our permanences are now held on Wednesday afternoons in the AFSM office (currently L71) from 13.30 – 16.00. Unfortunately, we receive very few visitors and not many telephone messages. On the other hand, we do receive a lot of email messages and do our best to respond rapidly. We have started to keep track of the subject matter of the messages. Most concern staff health insurance or pension matters. We also receive requests from non-members: we do reply to them but more succinctly and encourage them to become members.

6.5. Directory of members

The AFSM Directory is regularly updated by Jeanne Schmid -Ryan and is ready for uploading on the future SharePoint. As part of our drive to limit the cost of printing and mailing by WHO, It is no longer printed.

6.6. Pre-retirement seminars

We continue to take part in the pre-retirement seminars normally held annually at WHO/HQ, emphasizing the benefits of joining the AFSM and encouraging upcoming retirees to subscribe. These seminars are now held virtually which precludes our practice of serving light refreshments outside the meeting room and enabling participants to ask individual questions.

7. Pensions

During the last two years, the AFSM Executive Committee has been actively involved in pension issues, participating in meetings and availing itself of documentation to keep abreast of developments in order to inform AFSM members regularly via the *Quarterly News* and electronic communications, in addition to responding to members' individual enquiries on pensions as well as tax related issues.

Articles in the *Quarterly News* have reported on the discussions of items of interest at the three annual Pension Board meetings as well as the pension discussions at the annual FAFICS (Federation of Associations of Former International Civil Servants) Council including the presentations made by the Chief Executive of Pension Administration and the Representative of the Secretary-General for the Investment of the UNJSPF assets.

Although financial markets are known for their volatility, over the last biennium the Fund's investment value has held fairly steady during these uncertain geopolitical times. At end 2023, the investment portfolio was valued at USD 88.24 billion, by mid-2024 at USD 92.2 billion, and at the end of 2024, the value was USD 95.32 billion. There was a slight dip to around USD 92 billion in early spring of 2025 reflecting market anxiety. By end-May, however, the value rose to USD 97 billion. The latest Actuarial study (end 2023) determined that no liquidity issues were anticipated over the next 50 years and beyond. The funding ratio is 152%, much superior to the December 2021

ratio of 113%, meaning that the Fund has considerably more assets than needed to pay benefits. Further, the principal of the investment fund is projected to continue growing and very little, if any, is expected to be used to pay benefits for at least the next 50 years. The Fund's portfolio is robust thanks to the investment team's effective management, sound governance and wise investment decisions guiding the portfolio during challenging times and thus ensuring a steady income for retirees for years to come.

During the last biennium, the Pension Administration continued to improve its client services in its outreach to the global client population and to modernize its outdated information technology systems. It started organizing regular virtual Townhall meetings addressing various topics related to beneficiaries as well as Fund participants. The recordings are available on the UNJSPF website. More than 50% of eligible beneficiaries now submit the Digital Certificate of Entitlement (DCE).

The AFSM Executive Committee continues to assist the Pension Fund, through a coordinated approach with the WHO Pension Office and counterparts in WHO regional and retiree associations, in the annual exercise of tracing retirees whose previous year Certificate of Entitlement has not been returned. Much effort goes into this activity so that those concerned will be located and the missing Certificate can be dealt with in order to prevent the suspension of the retiree's monthly benefit payments. Probably thanks to the increasing use of the Digital CE, the annual number of missing CEs is regularly decreasing

Finally, the AFSM Executive Committee expresses its gratitude to the staff of the Geneva Pension Fund Office who are always so helpful and prompt in responding to requests to solve problems presented to the Committee by our members. We also thank our colleagues at the WHO Pension Office for their excellent collaboration with the AFSM.

As the financial situation of the UN System is currently under flux, the Pension Fund representatives at the General Assembly on 6 October will update our members on the latest developments.

8. Staff Health Insurance (SHI)

The Executive Committee continues to assist members in matters related to Staff Health Insurance (SHI).

We help those who have difficulties with reimbursement of their claims and/or with interpretation of SHI rules. If appropriate, we liaise with the SHI Secretariat if it appears that the retiree's request for reimbursement or advance approval has not been dealt with correctly for one reason or another. We enjoy excellent relations with the members of the SHI Secretariat who are always responsive to our communications/requests. We do not, under any circumstances, deal with matters or provide information when it is obvious that the answer should come from SHI.

Apart from the SHI Newsletters, we provide information on key developments related to SHI through the AFSM *Quarterly News*. The two members elected by retired staff at large on the SHI Global Oversight Committee (GOC) and who are members of our

Association, report on the key issues discussed at meetings of the GOC. The GOC oversees all policy matters related to SHI and makes appropriate recommendations to the Director-General on rule changes and other policy matters.

SHI is a regular topic on the agenda of the Global Council of AFSMs where regional AFSMs share their experiences on SHI matters. Members of the SHI secretariat attend to address the issues raised.

Members may have noted from relevant articles published in the *Quarterly News* that the financial situation of the SHI Fund is very good. Measures taken to increase the assets of the Fund have borne fruit. The balance at the end of 2024 was sufficient to cover approximately 80% of the liability for current retirees and active staff eligible for after-service health insurance. This compares favorably with the corresponding funding rates of other UN system organizations. The liability is projected by professional actuaries and is subject to fluctuation depending on such factors as inflation rates (affecting salaries, medical costs etc.), numbers of current and former staff, investments and discount rates (used to determine the current value of future payments). The next actuarial study will determine what effect the recent turmoil in financial markets and the cuts in budget and staff of WHO has had on the SHI Fund.

We frequently receive questions related to long-term care particularly from our members who find themselves in a difficult situation when they are in need of assistance with daily living tasks. This topic has been reviewed by the SHI Global Oversight Committee and both retired staff representatives were involved in these meetings. The cost of expanding the benefits was considered unaffordable for the health insurance at the current time. The retired staff representatives emphasized however the importance of ensuring that the daily US dollar allowance is adjusted for inflation on a regular basis. The Standing Committee on After-Service Health Insurance and Long-term Care of the Federation of Associations of Former International Civil Servants (FAFICS) is also reviewing this topic and guidelines are being developed to assist retirees to plan for this eventuality. A member of our Executive Committee and of AAFI/AFICS, Ann Van Hulle-Colbert, has become a member of this FAFICS Standing Committee.

We advise our members to consult the SHI Rules before undertaking costly medical treatment to ensure that they follow the correct procedures and request prior approval when appropriate.

9. Collaboration with regional associations of Former WHO Staff

In 2021, HQ and regional associations and informal groups of WHO retirees decided to form a Global Council of AFSMs, meeting virtually every six months. During the period under review, virtual meetings of the Council have been organized by AFSM-AMRO/PAHO (October 2023), AFSM-WPRO (November 2024) and AFSM-EMRO (June 2025). Among the main subjects discussed were the steps required to obtain regional recognition, clarification of our Staff Health Insurance rules and initiatives for providing support to selected WHO objectives and programmes.

AFSM-HQ organized a special hybrid meeting in May 2024 at the time of the World Health Assembly. The Director-General had invited each association to send one representative to the meeting in Geneva. Besides Dr Tedros, the meeting was also addressed by four Regional Directors who pledged full support for recognizing and supporting their respective AFSMs.

10. Relations with the HQ Staff Association

We maintain close collaboration with the HQ Staff Association which provides us with valuable assistance for various administrative issues, including the procurement of office equipment. The Staff Association secretariat continues to be of great support to us and we are very grateful to the team. As mentioned under item 4, our office remains close to theirs. We are invited to attend their Annual General Assemblies, and we invite their representatives to attend our General Assemblies. We meet with their President following his/her election and as necessary thereafter.

11. Activities and relations with other associations

11.1. Association of Former International Civil Servants (AAFI-AFICS)

We continued to participate in the regular Committee meetings of AAFI-AFICS Geneva as well as in its General Assembly in 2024. As in the past, this is a valuable opportunity to keep ourselves informed of new developments particularly concerning pensions and to compare the experiences of associations of former staff of other UN Agencies.

In July 2024 and July 2025, we participated in the annual Council meetings of the Federation of Associations of Former International Civil Servants (FAFICS). As mentioned above in section 8 (SHI), Ann Van Hulle-Colbert has become a member of the FAFICS Standing Committee on After-Service Health Insurance and Long-term Care.

11.2 Other associations of retirees

The ***Plateforme du Réseau Seniors Genève*** brings together member associations and public bodies as observers and is committed to the quality of life of seniors. It comprises 50 members (including the AFSM) and 32 observers dealing with topics affecting seniors. The *Plateforme* plays a monitoring and communication role concerning the realities of the field and the evolution of age-related needs. The AFSM has two representatives who currently attend their meetings. Matters discussed during the period of this report include: recommendations in a white paper for a coordinated policy on ageing in Geneva (*livre blanc pour une politique coordonnée de la vieillesse à Genève*); the work of support networks and groups for women, <https://reseaufemmes.ch> and <https://lacolcollective.ch/>, and a study on trajectories and retirement in the Canton of Valais specifically focusing on the inequalities in retirement faced by women; and housing for seniors, including work involving town planning, architectural issues and budget, administrative and legal planning for the future. The

Plateforme celebrated its 20th anniversary in May 2025. More information can be found on their website (in French only) <https://www.plateformeseniors.ch/>.

The AFSM also maintains relations with the British Association of Former UN Civil Servants (BAFUNCS) which includes many former WHO staff members.

12. Social activities

There has not been a Solidarity Fair for several years now but if one is planned we will be pleased to organize our traditional tombola, donate the prizes and give the proceeds to the Solidarity Fund to help staff in financial difficulty.

Every year we inform our members of the venue of the UN InterAgency Games, a sporting event that brings together staff from United Nations agencies. The Games, hosted this year by UNESCO, celebrated their 50th annual edition in the city of Rennes (France, Brittany).

12.1 Annual receptions and lunches

Our last reception was held in 2023 but unfortunately not many AFSM members attended. In consultation with local members, the Executive Committee decided to hold a reception only every two years at the end of the General Assembly. We sincerely hope that many more members will attend in 2025. However, in the interests of economy, we will just be offering an apéritif – soft drinks and wine and a few light refreshments. We will also place collection boxes at the reception in case members would like to make a personal contribution to the WHO Foundation (see item 1 for the AFSM’s contribution to the Foundation).

Whilst consulting local members about the frequency of receptions, we received positive feedback about holding AFSM lunches, at individual member’s expense. To-date they have been a success and we wish for a “bonne continuation”. If any member has not yet expressed interest in joining the lunches, kindly let us know by email and we will add your name to the invitation distribution list.

12.2 Cruises

The 2024 cruise, organized by Charles Hager and Bunty Muller, took 8 participants on an 8-day cruise in Andalusia. Another cruise is planned for October 2025, stopping at Prague, Dresden and the Castles of Bohemia.

12.3 Walk the Talk

When this event is held, we inform our local members and some participate. Various members of our Executive Committee take part and in 2024 there was a good-sized group, together with representatives of the Regional AFSMs who were in Geneva for the meeting of the Global Council of AFSMs.

13. Thanks

Our sincere thanks go to:

- The Director-General and his office
- The Director HRT, our focal point in HQ, and other members of their team
- The Administration, including the SHI and Pension offices as well as the Printing and Distribution services
- The Global Service Centre and the HQ/IT team
- The Staff Health and Welfare service for the influenza vaccinations and the assistance of the Staff Counsellor when needed
- The Staff Association and its secretariat
- The reception and security services
- The team handling the conference room bookings and videoconferencing
- The interpretation team
- The archives team
- The communications team
- The WHO website and electronic hosting platforms teams
- The team dealing with healthy ageing

14. Concluding remarks

In line with the DG's slogan "*Once WHO, always WHO*", we are extremely concerned with the financial crisis hitting our Organization and the entire UN Organization system, and the many humanitarian non-governmental organizations. We sincerely hope for a better future and will do our best to help where we can

More than ever, we welcome new volunteers to help with the work of your Executive Committee.

READERS' LETTERS

One day we will walk the “*Tour du Mont Blanc*”

The article by Gill Mayers about the United Nations Women’s Guild (UNWG), in the previous issue (*QNT 139 April edition*) reminded me of my first Alpine hikes. “*One day we will walk the “Tour du Mont Blanc” together!*”, my friend Catherine and I had often said to each other. It was a lovely thought. Not that we had much experience mountain walking, or much time to do it in. WHO life, you all know it. And we were both raising families too. But one day....

And then, in 2015, we decided to do it, in two instalments. The *Compagnie des Guides de Chamonix* proposed a guide, itinerary and huts. First, we would do the Northern half. Former WHO colleagues, a daughter and several of Catherine’s new friends from the UNWG Hiking Group decided to join, making us eight people in all. As it happened, we hiked in a late summer spell of cutting rain, icy winds and low hanging clouds that offered only sporadic views of the glorious peaks around us. Our guide Corinne taught us all about the local flowers and landscape, and we spotted chamois, ibex and tetras.



On the 2018 Dolomites hike.

The author, Liz Mason and Catherine d’Arcangues at the *Forcela di Lech* pass.

the *Dolom-eights* went to the, well, Dolomites. The accompanying picture of Liz, Catherine and I was taken there at the *Forcela di Lech* (2486m).

In subsequent years we morphed into the *Dames du Midi*, *Pyramies* (Pyrenees) 1 and 2, and in 2024 the *Slovenian Octet*. Our group currently has seven nationalities and an age span of some 15 (?) years. And My!, they can walk! While I found the steep climb up to the *Kredarica* hut daunting enough; the three hardest walkers went another 350m right up to the top of *Triglav* in the Julian Alps (2864m). Three days later we were all safely back at Lake Bohinj, celebrating our adventures with a final dinner together.

I am so grateful for this group’s expectation that I’ll obviously join them next year again for another hiking holiday. It is now ten years of wonderful, shared adventures. Hiking buddies have become friends.

Nothing on our minds but walking, friendship and getting up to that >2600m pass, and the next. It was wonderful. The next summer more kids joined, and with a group of 11 we completed the Southern half in blissfully sunny weather with breathtaking views. Over these two adventures, a core group of dedicated hiking friends had started to congeal. So why not plan another hike for next year? We adopted a tradition of suitable team-names. In 2017, the *Haute Routers* did just that. And in 2018,



Three of the 2024 *Slovenian Octet* hike on the way to the *Kredarica Hut* in the Julian Alps in Slovenia.

The author, Mike Nathan and Petra Bosnjak.

Every September it is glorious to meet up again in giggles at the start of a new hike, all ready for a week of adventure. Which begs the question: what is the nicest part of a hike? Is it starting off? Walking with abandonment in nature? Scaling that highest pass? Or arriving at a mountain hut at the end of the day and taking your shoes off?

What I also enjoy immensely during our hikes is the company of other WHO retirees. I try to blend in back home these days but will always remain part of the UN community. Who else would understand the joys and anguishes of duty travel, WHAs, scientific report writing, UN language proficiency exams, raising international kids. Who else would relish the memory of meeting up at "*the organigram*", of all those colourful flags overhead, the friendship of colleagues and experts from all over the world, the treasures to be found in the WHO Library and Archives, and even Dr Brundtland's office shuffle.

Every year as summer approaches I get nervous about the preparations for the next mountain adventure. The best I can do for altitude adjustment here in The Netherlands

is to hit the gym, walk up and down the stairs, and get up again after every stumble. So far, so good.

The UN Women's Guild Hiking Group goes out into the mountains every Wednesday. If you read this and live in the Geneva area: why not join them? I would! And for all of us who once stood on the 8th floor terrace of the Main Building and longingly looked out over the Alps in the distance: at the next opportunity just go there and hike. You won't regret it.

Aafje Rietveld