



**ASSOCIATION OF FORMER INTERNATIONAL
CIVIL SERVANTS – THAILAND
(AFICS-T)**



NEWSLETTER No. 1/2023-2025

17 August 2023

Dear Members,

This Newsletter is the first issue released by the present Executive Board since its election to office on 18 July 2023. The present issue contains the following matters:

1. Report of the 2023 Annual General Assembly (AGA)

We are pleased to report that AFICS-T has recently and successfully held its 2023 Annual General Assembly (AGA) on 18 July 2023. The Assembly was well attended by some 104 registered members and had interactive and constructive discussions. The complete report of the 2023 AGA is hereby attached for your kind attention and information.

The Assembly took note of, and complimented, the work that the Executive Board (2019-2021) undertook over its initial two-year term and its extended term up to 2023, through its various Committees and Sub-Committees. The Assembly endorsed the various financial accounts of the Association and was pleased to learn that the current total assets of AFICS-T stood at Baht 3,260,313.94

The Assembly also considered two proposed Bylaws amendments submitted by the independent Working Group mandated by the 2022 AGA held on 19 July 2022. That decision stemmed from the fact that the Executive Board was not able to conduct its normal affairs due to the recent Covid-19 pandemic. After careful consideration and discussions, the two draft amendments were approved unanimously.

The Assembly elected a new AFICS-T Executive Board for the period 2023-2025 as recommended by the 2022 AGA and in line with the Bylaws governing the conduct of the election at the Assembly meetings in odd numbered years. The Board is composed of the following office-bearers and members:

Office-Bearers

- | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. President | Mr. Suraphon Songweera |
| 2. First Vice-President | Mr. Peter Hegenbarth |
| 3. Second Vice-President | Ms. Pagapunt Aneknidhi |
| 4. Treasurer | Ms. Duanglutai Khomson |
| 5. Deputy Treasurer | Ms. Suntaree Suwannasing |
| 6. Secretary | Mr. Jean-Louis Vignuda |
| 7. Deputy Secretary | Ms. Uraiwan Siriwatananukul |
| 8. Web Master | Mr. Somkhon Antanai |
| 9. Registrar | Ms. Soythip Udomyingcharoen |
| 10. Communication Officer | Ms. Suthasinee Maruttamarn |

Members

11. Ms. Chitraporn Boonyasit
12. Ms. Duangthip Pattraplachai
13. Ms. Sumetee Jongmu
14. Ms. Vena Visaruitawongse
15. Ms. Siraprapha Khomson
16. Ms. Yupa Wongsuchart
17. Ms. Junpen Jirasavetakul
18. Mr. Somchai Congtavinsutti

The Assembly benefitted of the presence of Dr. Surachai Vichankaiyakij, AFICS-T Medical Adviser, who gave a brief presentation of the current Covid-19 situation. He, particularly, mentioned that since May 2023 the World Health Organization (WHO) Emergency Committee on Covid-19 recommended that Covid-19 is no more considered as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern. This does not mean that the pandemic itself is over, but the global emergency is by now lifted. In this context, Dr. Surachai provided a current guideline for treatment of Covid-19 patients, who do not have any symptoms or have mild symptoms.

2. Consideration of recommendations made at the 2023 AGA

At its First Meeting held on 4 August 2023, the Executive Board (2023-2025) considered some of the issues which was raised at the 2023 AGA and deliberated upon them.

(a) Appointment of Advisers to the Executive Board

As reminded by the 2023 AGA, advisers to the Executive Board should be appointed by the Board during its tenure. Accordingly, the Board appointed the following advisers:

Mr. Vudhithep Tanghongse
Mr. Yossuwan Anandhwanlert

Dr. Surachai Vichankaiyakij (Medical)

(b) Level of token financial contribution to the deceased family members

At the 2023 AGA, a request was made from the floor to increase the level of subsidy that the Sub-Committee on Funerals allocates to the deceased family members. It was felt that such contributions should be adjusted somewhat to assist bereaved families to face continuous increase in funeral expenses. The Executive Board acknowledged that indeed funeral expenses have gradually increased over the years and it appreciated the concern expressed at the 2023 AGA.

The current policy regarding financial assistance to the deceased family members consists of a token financial contribution of Baht 2,000.00 plus a presentation of a wreath with an average cost of Baht 1,000.00, bringing the total financial assistance to Baht 3,000.00. These expenses are charged to the AFICS-T General Account.

After careful consideration of the issue, the Board was of the view that increasing the level of subsidy to the deceased family members at this juncture would constrain our limited budget. Consequently, it was decided to keep the current level of funeral subsidy of Baht 2,000.00 as a token financial contribution and Baht 1,000.00 as the cost for the presentation of a wreath.

(c) Remittance of pension benefits to AFICS-T members

At the 2023 AGA, another issue was raised regarding the timing of the remittances of pension benefits to AFICS-T members. The Executive Board has been informed that such an issue has been already brought to the attention to the concerned officers of the Siam Commercial Bank (SCB) Headquarters as well as of the UNJSPF. The situation with the timing of the remittances is as follows.

The UNJSPF initiates the transfer of pension benefits few days before the end of the month. Transfer to those retiree members, who opted to have their pension benefits credited to their UNFCU accounts, will receive their pension benefits the same day as the transfer operation is done in New York. For those retiree members who will receive their pension benefits in their respective place of residence, the UNJSPF will request the Citi Bank and the JP Morgan Bank to transfer the pension benefits through SWIFT bank network to the selected bank account of retirees. We have been assured that UNJSPF will endeavor to ensure that the banks of each retiree will be receiving their pension benefits before the last working day of the month.

AFICS-T contacted also the Foreign Department of the Siam Commercial Bank (SCB) Headquarters to enquire how the remittances of pension benefits from UNJSPF through Citi Bank and JP Morgan is handled by SCB. Because of the time difference, transfer from New York arrived in Bangkok during the night before the last working day of the month. Then the following morning, pension benefits received will be sorted into different batches and credited to retirees and beneficiaries during the day.

(d) Excursion programme

The Executive Board took note of the request from the 2023 AGA to revive the activities of the Committee on Recreation and Tours, now that travel and health restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic have been lifted. The Board requested the Committee on Recreation and Tours to work out both international and domestic excursions projects.

(e) Distribution of AFICS-T Newsletters

Distribution of the Newsletters, especially to those AFICS-T members who opted to receive them by postal mail, have become a cumbersome activity for members of the Committee on Information and Record. The Board took note of the concern of the Committee and decided to privileging the distribution by email and therefore reducing as much as possible the distribution by postal mail. The Board wished to invite those AFICS-T members, who currently received the Newsletters by postal mail, to provide an email address. However, the distribution by postal mail remains available for those who insist on this channel of communication.

With best regards,

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Suraphon', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Suraphon Songweera
President, AFICS-T 2023-2025



**ASSOCIATION OF FORMER INTERNATIONAL
CIVIL SERVANTS – THAILAND**



**REPORT OF THE
2023 ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY
(Tuesday, 18 July 2023)**

1. The 2023 Annual General Assembly (2023 AGA) of the Association of Former International Civil Servants – Thailand (AFICS-T) was held on Tuesday, 18 July 2023, in Conference Room 1 of the United Nations Conference Centre, Bangkok. The Meeting was conducted in a hybrid conference format allowing participation of AFICS-T members online in addition to those present on site. Accordingly, altogether 104 AFICS-T members registered and attended the Meeting. As the quorum of at least 80 members of the Association has been attained (Article IV, para, 4 of the Bylaws), the Meeting then could proceed as convened.

2. Mr. Suraphon Songweera, President of AFICS-T, called the Meeting to order at 09.00 hours. He expressed his deep appreciation for the presence at the Meeting (online) of Ms. Soomi Ro, Director, ESCAP Division of Administration, representing the ESCAP Executive Secretary, and other distinguished guests who kindly answered to AFICS-T's invitation to participate at this 2023 AGA. The President also thanked all members of AFICS-T who had made their efforts to attend in person the 2023 AGA as well as welcomed those members who followed the proceedings online. He then invited Ms. Soomi Ro to address and officially open the 2023 Annual General Assembly.

**Agenda item 1. Address of Ms. Soomi Ro, on behalf of the Executive Secretary
of ESCAP**

3. In her opening remarks, Ms. Soomi Ro expressed her sincere appreciation to Khun Suraphon Songweera, the President of AFICS-T, for inviting ESCAP to officiate at the opening ceremony of the 2023 Annual General Assembly of the Association again this year. This was the second time that she was invited to attend this Annual General Assembly of AFICS-T, and wished to convey to all participants the warmest greetings from the Executive Secretary of ESCAP, who is currently on her official mission outside of Bangkok.

4. In her capacity of the Director of Administration of ESCAP, she was pleased to witness how the Executive Board of AFICS-T had brought, and still did, a wealth of knowledge and experience, including the AFICS-T volunteers, to serve the retiree community. Noteworthy was the contribution of the Association in protecting the benefits and representing the interest of the retirees, their spouses, and dependents, with respect to UN pensions, life and health insurance and most importantly the kind support and coordination with ESCAP Division of Administration. In this connection, Ms. Soomi Ro wished to commend the AFICS-T Board members and volunteers for their remarkable efforts to work in close collaboration with United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund (UNJSPF), Cigna and other counterparts, providing thoughts and insights as to enhance their services in support of the UN retiree community.

5. As Ms. Soomi Ro did emphasize during the AFICS-T General Assembly last year, fostering strong partnerships has always been one of her top priorities as the Director of Administration of ESCAP, and of course, this meant maintaining the existing good relationships with all stakeholders of the Organization, including AFICS-T. She was confident that ESCAP and AFICS-T will continue to work harmoniously together on matters of our mutual interest, with an aim to serve the needs of all UN retirees and their spouses living in Thailand, and to assist them in various aspects of benefits to which UN retirees were entitled.

6. In ending her remarks, Ms. Soomi Ro, on behalf of ESCAP, would like to express her profound gratitude to the Association for its valuable contribution in providing advice and assistance to former international civil servants and to those who were about to separate from service on questions of pensions, residence, health insurance, and other important concerns. Aside from wishing 2023 AGA a fruitful meeting today, she wished all AFICS-T members the very best for their well-deserved retirement and good health. She then concluded her statement and officially opened the 2023 AGA.

Agenda item 2. Statement by the President

7. The President thanked Ms. Soomi Ro for her opening and inspiring address delivered on behalf of the ESCAP Secretariat. Her encouraging remarks kindly recognized the work of AFICS-T in addressing matters of interest and well-being of former UN retirees living in Thailand. It was gratifying to learn that ESCAP Division of Administration would maintain fostering strong partnerships and cooperation with AFICS-T.

8. The President then expressed AFICS-T deep appreciation for the support provided by the ESCAP Human Resources Management Section, Conference Management Unit, ESCAP Staff Council, and the MAF Executive Committee. The President also referred to the recently established UNJSPF Bangkok Liaison Office and the valuable contribution of Mr. Brian Casatelli, as the UNJSPF Liaison Officer.

9. The President also underlined that AFICS-T had continuously endeavored to ensure assistance and full support to all its members and their respective family members in addressing issues on pension matters, medical insurance, life insurance and other concerns. In this connection, the President was confident, with the return to some form of normalcy, that AFICS-T would be able to resume a wide range of activities which unfortunately were suspended during the Covid-19 pandemic.

10. The President also expressed his sincere appreciation to all Executive Board Members, Advisers, all volunteers, and many others who had been untiringly working behind the scene, for having devoted and sacrificed their personal time to provide voluntary services. Without their support, all AFICS-T members and their family members would not have received prompt assistance in tackling issues of concern to them. While appreciating the cooperation of all volunteers, AFICS-T Office would be more than pleased to welcome more volunteers to assist AFICS-T in its activities.

11. In concluding his statement, and on behalf of the Executive Board, the President expressed his gratitude and appreciation to all participants present onsite and those online for having spared their precious time to attend this Assembly. The President wished them and their family happiness and good health.

Agenda item 3, Adoption of Agenda

12. The President requested the Meeting to consider the provisional agenda and enquired whether there was any proposal for change or inclusion of additional items. There was none and thus the Meeting adopted the following agenda as drafted:

1. Address of the Executive Secretary of ESCAP
2. Statement by the AFICS-T President
3. Adoption of the Agenda
4. Consideration of AFICS-T activities undertaken during the period July 2022 to June 2023 (as contained in the attached Annual Report of the Executive Board)
5. Questions and Answers
6. Consideration of two proposed amendments to the Bylaws
7. Election of the Executive Board of AFICS-T 2023-2025
8. Recommendations of activities to be undertaken by AFICS-T
9. Other matters

Agenda item 4. Consideration of AFICS-T activities undertaken during the period July 2022 to June 2023

13. Introducing this agenda item, the President expressed his sincere appreciation to the Chairpersons and Co-Chairpersons of the various Committees and Sub-Committees of AFICS-T Executive Board and their members for the preparation, revision, and finalization of the annual report of the Executive Board.

1. Executive Board of AFICS-T

14. The current Executive Board (2019-2021) of AFICS-T was elected at its 19th Annual General Assembly in July 2019. Subsequently as decided at the 2022 AGA, its term of office has been extended until the convening of this 2023 AGA due to difficulties in organizing physical sessions of AGA in both 2021 and 2022. At the 2023 AGA, an election of a new Executive Board would have to be conducted.

15. On 27 December 2022, Mr. Suraphong Chuachamsai submitted his resignation from the Executive Board, effective 1 January 2023, thus relinquishing his position of Second Vice-President and Chairperson of the Sub-Committee on CEs. In this connection, the President wished on behalf of the Board to put on record his sincere thanks and appreciation to Mr. Suraphong for his valuable contribution and devotion to the AFICS-T, particularly in handling the CE exercises.

2. Summary of Financial report

16. Ms. Panvipa Thammakoranonta, Auditor, has completed the auditing of all accounts of AFICS-T and the final audited financial statement of account for the period 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023 was distributed at the Meeting. The President took the opportunity to express his sincere appreciation to Ms. Panvipa for her dedication in providing voluntary auditing services of all AFICS-T accounts on a free of charge basis.

17. As reported on the first financial statement, i.e., the balance sheet of the Association, the current total assets of AFICS-T stood at Baht 3,260,313.94 out of which Baht 2,723,461.94 were deposited with the Siam Commercial Bank (SCB), Baht 531,852.00 were deposited with Mutual Assistance Fund (MAF), and Baht 5,000.00 held on hand as petty cash.

18. The Meeting agreed to the proposal of the President to retain the services of Ms. Panvipa Thammakoranonta to audit all accounts of AFICS-T for the period July 2023 to 30 June 2024 and submit the final audited financial statement of account at the 2024 Annual General Assembly. Ms. Panvipa has been auditing the accounts of AFICS-T for many years and is very familiar with the accounting system of AFICS-T. In addition, she kindly accepted to continue to provide her auditing services free of charge.

19. AFICS-T as a member in the Federation of the Association of Former International Civil Servants (FAFICS), continued to pay its annual contribution which amounted in 2023 at US\$390.00 effected in the first quarter of 2023.

3. Summary of activities

20. The President then invited the Meeting to refer to the Annual Report of the Executive Board covering the period July 2022 – June 2023 and listed the various Committees and Sub-Committees which had been established for ensuring the smooth and efficient functioning of the activities of AFICS-T. He then briefly walked through the various sections of the report highlighting the major activities along with those normal services undertaken during the reporting period.

21. The President was pleased to report that since the convening of the 2022 AGA, the Covid-19 pandemic had shown some improvement and thus related sanitary restrictions have been gradually lifted such as the resumption of physical meetings within the UNCC facilities and the availability of the ESCAP secretariat services to a certain extent. While AFICS-T could then resume its activities, however some of these could not be implemented yet. The Executive Board had however endeavored to ensure the delivery of assistance to AFICS-T members and carrying out activities which were felt as priority matters to members.

3.1 Committee on Pension and Group Life Insurance Benefits

22. This year, pension benefits on both US dollar track and Thai Baht track have shown an increase of their cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) as follows: 6.4 percent for US dollar track and 8.0 percent for local Thai Baht track, effective 1 April 2023.

23. On 6 April 2023, the UNJSPF held a global town hall in New York and indicated that the market value of the assets was at US\$1.7 billion as of 31 March 2023, showing a 5 percent higher than the amount reported at the close of the previous year.

24. The Executive Board continued in assisting pensioners and spouses in drafting e-mail messages or letters to UNJSPF, regarding such matters as periodic benefits, disabled child benefit, spouse benefit, two-track pension adjustment system, change of mailing address and bank accounts for pension benefit deposit, etc. Upon request, the Executive Board also assisted spouses of the deceased members in approaching HRMS for the drafting and the submission of necessary documents to UNJSPF for the processing and conversion from “pension benefits” to “spouse benefits” as well as group life insurance reimbursement.

3.2 Sub-Committee on Certificates of Entitlement (CE)

25. The Sub-Committee on CE assisted members in handling the 2022 CE exercise. Altogether 341 paper-based CEs from the first mailing list and an additional 15 CEs from the second mailing list were collected by AFICS-T and forwarded to UNJSPF. Furthermore, the Sub-Committee provided help to UNJSPF in locating 24 UN retirees/beneficiaries living in Thailand who had failed to send their 2022 CEs to the fund within deadline. AFICS-T accordingly conducted its own investigation and was able to locate the whereabouts of all the 24 listed UN retirees/beneficiaries and informed UNJSPF of its findings.

26. According to the UNJSPF news dated January 2023, retirees/beneficiaries were informed that starting from 2 January 2023 they could issue their 2023 CEs with the DCE app. The “first mailing” of (paper-based) 2023 CEs was expected to be sent by the end of June 2023 as per past practice. For those on paper-based CEs, they are advised to follow the instructions from the Sub-Committee on CE as contained in the Newsletter No. 20 dated 10 July 2023 which provides relevant information on ways of returning the 2023 CEs to UNJSPF via AFICS-T services.

27. In this connection, the President wished to take this opportunity to express his appreciation to the efforts of all members of the Sub-Committee on CE for their work in discharging their duty under the able chairmanship of Mr. Suraphong.

3.3 Committee on Medical Benefits

28. Cigna remained the third-party administrator of the United Nations Health Insurance Plan covering both internationally and locally recruited staff members, including retirees and their dependents, under the World Wide Plan (WWP) and the Medical Insurance Plan (MIP).

29. There were some new benefits under MIP for locally-recruited staff. In particular, the coverage for Assisted Reproductive Technology and infertility treatments whereby following a mandatory prior approval process, infertility treatments are eligible for reimbursement of 80 % of the expenses, up to a lifetime ceiling of US\$15,000.00 per family. The ceiling applicable to optical benefits (lenses, frames, and Lasik eye surgery) would be increased by 20%, effective for purchase in 2023. The detailed information of the above-mentioned new benefits is available on the Cigna’s website.

30. The regular visits of Cigna’s representatives to Bangkok were unfortunately suspended during the period of Covid-19 pandemic. However, on 28 March 2023 Ms. Sasha Samuel, Cigna Regional Representative for Asia, visited Bangkok and had a meeting with AFICS-T Board. The outcome of the meeting was productive and it was agreed to re-establish these regular consultations.

3.4 Committee on Information and Records

31. The Committee continued to keep updating information on the website such as reports, Newsletters, and other relevant information of concern to AFICS-T members. It also helped in printing various documents, e.g., Annual Report of the Executive Board, Newsletters, etc. and in distributing them through postal mail to AFICS-T members who opted for hard copies.

3.5 Committee on Publicity and Newsletters

32. The Committee assisted in issuing, on a regular basis, several “Circulars/Newsletters” with a view to keeping members informed about issues and activities that would be of concern and interest to them.

3.6 Committee on Benevolent Fund and Funerals

33. As of 30 April 2023, AFICS-T received a voluntary financial contribution to the Benevolent Fund amounting to Baht 1,000.00.

34. As of 30 April 2023, there were 12 members of our Association listed as deceased. Since then up to the time of the present AGA, the President regretfully announced that 6 additional members passed away as follows: Ms. Pakitta Ruenpituks (23 May 2023), Mr. Chan Saengboon (1 June 2023), Mr. Bamrung Ansvananda (20 June 2023), Mr. Preecha Nualnok (22 June 2023), Ms. Boonchuen Sheumsuk (6 July 2023), and Ms. Patumarn Puang-Ngern (6 July 2023), bringing to a total of 18 deceased members over the period 1 July 2022 to 19 July 2023. As customary, AFICS-T had presented wreaths and provided token financial contribution to the deceased family members. A traditional minute of silence had been observed in remembrance to the deceased members.

3.7 Committee on Recreation and Tours

35. Despite the gradual improvement about the Covid-19 pandemic, the Committee on Recreation and Tours decided to continue the temporary suspension of both international and domestic excursions project until the time when safe travels are allowed to take place again.

3.8 Committee on Charity Activities

36. During the period under review, the Committee on Charity Activities decided to continue to suspend temporarily all its charity activities. However, the Committee looked forward to resuming AFICS-T assistance to community projects and other worthy initiatives. Considering that the Covid-19 pandemic situation has shown gradual improvement, AFICS-T would be able to visit safely deserving communities that would be eligible to AFICS-T charity projects.

3.9 Committee on Foreigners Living in Thailand (FLiT)

37. Mr. Peter Hegenbarth, Chairman of the Committee on FLiT, informed the Meeting that the Committee continued providing advisory services to active and retired foreign UN staff members in- and outside of Thailand regarding retirement in the country. The main issues dealt during the reporting period were as follows.

38. **Health insurance issues of UN retirees on Non-OA visa status.** Beginning of 2022 the Government of Thailand had announced a new set of rules for the renewal of Non-OA retirement visa. The related amendment stipulated that as of 1 October 2022, for those with foreign health insurance, it would no longer be required to buy local health insurance for visa renewal. However, proof of foreign insurance of 100,000 US\$ would be accepted only upon presentation of a Foreign Insurance Certificate,

endorsed by an embassy. This turned out to be the major obstacle because embassies, e.g., of Germany, refused to authenticate such documents. Therefore, the expected improvement remained elusive.

39. **From 1 September 2022 the Long-Term Residence (LTR)** visa option was introduced to be operated by the Board of Investment. The programme targets (a) highly skilled and (b) “work-from-home” professionals, (c) wealthy global citizens and (d) wealthy pensioners. The LTR visa has a duration of 10 years and the residential address (90-days) reporting must be done only once a year or a year after last entry into the country. Foreign health insurance cover, e.g., from Cigna or other UN-ASHI providers is accepted. This has changed the visa situation for many of the foreign UN retirees completely and most of our colleagues, especially those beset by Non-OA visa issues, have applied for this new type of visa and were accepted, often within a record time of three weeks. Based on the experience of our members the FLiT Committee has put together a set of guidelines that are available on request.

40. Mr. Hegenbarth then recalled that AFICS-T got established in 2001 and from only 87 registered participants at the Founding Meeting on 26 February 2001 the Association now have reached a membership of some 853 persons. During these 22 years, Committee on FLiT had endeavored to assist AFICS-T members in addressing issues such as Health Insurance, Immigration matters and other issues of concerns. In this connection, he particularly wished to put on record the contribution of Mr. Jan Orsini, a founding member, together with Steve Torok and Peter Wickenden, of AFICS-T and active FLiT member. Among all his various activities benefiting AFICS-T in general, he drafted a very useful document helping members to list all their pertinent information which could be retrieved at any time in case of necessary action (Letter of Instruction). The document template is available on request.

3.10 Ad Hoc Working Group on Bylaws amendments

41. In response to a decision taken by the 2022 Annual General Assembly, the Executive Board, at its 38th meeting on 4 November 2022, established an Ad Hoc Working Group tasked with the drafting of relevant amendments to the Bylaws. These amendments would provide a legal framework to the Executive Board to take any necessary decision in case of disruption of the normal conduct of affairs, such as it was experienced during the recent Covid-19 pandemic period. This issue will be the subject of consideration under Agenda item 6.

Agenda item 5. Questions and Answers

42. The President opened the floor for participants to intervene on any issues of concern following the presentation of activities undertaken during the period July 2022-June 2023.

43. One participant referred to the level of subsidy that the Sub-Committee on Funerals allocates to the deceased family members. For many years, that contribution has been Baht 2,000.00. It was felt that such contribution should be adjusted somewhat to assist bereaved families to face the continuous increase in funeral expenses. The President took note of the issue raised and agreed with the merit of it. He will thus transmit the consideration of this issue to the next Executive Board.

Agenda item 6. Consideration of two proposed amendments to the Bylaws

44. As indicated in the document introducing this item, a decision was taken at the 2022 Annual General Assembly requesting the Executive Board to establish an independent Working Group tasked with the drafting of relevant amendments to the Bylaws. This decision stemmed from the fact that the Executive Board was not able to conduct its normal affairs due to the recent Covid-19 pandemic period. Thus, it was felt necessary to provide a legal framework to the Executive Board to take appropriate actions in such extraordinary circumstances.

45. Accordingly, on November 2022 the Executive Board established the required independent Working Group, which included 5 Board members as follows:

Members: Mr. Ti Le-Huu
 Mr. Peter Hegenbarth
 Mr. Yossuwan Anandhwanlert

Adviser: Mr. Vudhithep Tanghongse

Coordinator: Mr. Jean-Louis Vignuda

46. The Working Group commenced its work in November 2022 and by January 2023 completed its task and presented its recommendation to the Executive Board.

47. The Working Group felt that the addition of two amendments would suffice to address the issue based on the following features:

(a) the first one is a new paragraph 2 under Article IV (The Assembly) which would define the course of action that needed to be taken if the Assembly could not be convened due to special circumstances that can be referred to as “*Force Majeure*”, for example pandemics such as COVID-19.

(b) the second one is a new paragraph 14 under article V (The Executive Board) and would provide the Executive Board with the authority to perform in a caretaker capacity as a cross-reference with the above first amendment.

48. Accordingly, the two draft amendments proposed are as follows:

(a) First amendment:

Under Article IV The Assembly: new paragraph 2

“2. If the Assembly could not be convened due to special circumstances that can be referred to as “*Force Majeure*”, for example pandemics such as COVID-19, the Executive Board would then be authorized to postpone the convening of the Assembly until circumstances would allow the Assembly to carry out the functions stipulated in paragraph 3 of Article IV, especially the election of the Executive Board. During the interim period, the Executive Board shall also be authorized to continue to perform its functions in a caretaker capacity. All members shall be notified accordingly.”

(b) Second amendment:

Under Article V The Executive Board: new paragraph 14

“14. In such exceptional cases whereby, the Executive Board may not be able to convene the Annual General Assembly as a result of “*Force Majeure*” (as referred in paragraph 2 of Article IV), the Executive Board, as further stipulated in the Bylaws under Article IV “The Assembly”, paragraph 2, shall continue to perform in a caretaker capacity and to carry out the full range of functions as stipulated in paragraph 10 of Article V.”

49. Then these two proposed draft amendments were submitted in January 2023 to the Executive Board for its consideration. The Board agreed with the two draft amendments proposed by the Group and requested that they should be submitted to the next 2023 Annual General Assembly for its consideration.

50. The Meeting thanked the President for his presentation of the issue at hand and congratulated the members of the Working group for their diligent and thorough work which culminated in the proposed two amendments. While agreeing in principle with the two amendments, one participant suggested that it would be useful to elaborate on the extent of “*Force Majeure*” which should not be limited to only “pandemic such COVID-19”. However, the Meeting felt that the proposal to add some more exceptional circumstances would tie the Executive Board to only those mentioned instances and restrict its range of actions. Indeed, the term of “*Force Majeure*” could be defined as an unforeseeable course of events or a concept of an act of God for which no party can be held accountable. Therefore, there was no need to elaborate further. Besides, the example of “pandemic such as COVID-19” was introduced only to justify the need to propose such amendments at this time.

51. Following these exchanges of view, the Assembly agreed on the two amendments as proposed which will be accordingly incorporated in the revised version No. 5 of the Bylaws.

Agenda item 7. Election of the Executive Board of AFICS-T 2023-2025

52. After a period of 4 years during which the Association was unable to conduct the renewal of its Executive Board, elected in 2019 at the 19th session of the AGA, the President was pleased to be able to conduct the election of a new Executive Board for the period 2023-2025 and invite the Assembly to consider the proposed list of nominees, sponsored by the outgoing Executive Board.

53. The floor was opened for comments. The first comments referred to the title given to Dr. Surachai as Honorary Adviser. According to the Bylaws, the “Association may confer an honorary membership on individuals who have rendered meritorious service to the Association or to the United Nations system.” Therefore, there was no indication in the Bylaws of a position of “honorary” adviser. Another comment raised an objection to the inclusion of adviser nominees in the list. According to the Bylaws, the nominees for the Executive Board “shall consist of office bearers ... and at least six other Executive Board members. The Executive Board, during its tenure, may appoint additional Executive Board members and Advisers.” Thus, the list of nominees should exclude the advisers who would be appointed later by the Board during its tenure.

54. The President thanked participants for their comments. Accordingly, the proposed list of nominees would be revised to include only candidates to the positions of office bearers and executive Board members. The revised list of nominees was then unanimously agreed upon and the proposed

candidates duly elected to form the new Executive Board 2023-2025 by a round of applause to officialize the agreement.

Agenda item 8. Recommendations of activities to be undertaken by AFICS-T

55. One participant raised the issue of the timing of the remittance of pension benefits to AFICS-T members. According to UNJSPF, the pension benefits are transferred on Thursday of the last week of the month. That participant was really concerned about the delay that might have happened due to the handling of the transfers operated by the Siam Commercial Bank (United Nations Branch). For transparency purposes, it was requested that AFICS-T should maintain contacts with UNJSPF and the concerned Bank in ensuring timely remittance of the monthly pensions. The President took note of the issue raised and would request the newly elected Executive Board to monitor the phases involved in the remittance, particularly to ensure that the Siam Commercial Bank (UN Branch) should process the transfers immediately upon their receipt of the transfer advice.

56. Another participant welcomed the return of a certain amount of normalcy after more than three years of Covid-19 pandemic. It might be time to revive the activities of the Committee on Recreation and Tours and organizing excursions. The President took note and would request the Committee on Recreation and Tours to work out both international and domestic excursions projects.

Agenda item 9. Other matters

1. Presentation by Dr. Surachai Vichankaiyakij

57. Dr. Surachai Vichankaiyakij, AFICS-T Medical Adviser, was invited to give a brief presentation on the actual Covid-19 situation.

58. The Covid-19 pandemic is a global outbreak of coronavirus, an infectious disease caused by the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-COV-2) virus. The first cases of novel coronavirus (nCoV) were first detected in China in December 2019, with the virus spreading rapidly to other countries across the world. This led World Health Organization (WHO) to declare a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) on 30 January 2020, and to characterize the outbreak as a pandemic on 11 March 2020.

59. On 5 May 2023, more than three years into the pandemic, the WHO Emergency Committee on Covid-19 recommended to the Director-General, who accepted the recommendation, that given the disease was by now well-established and ongoing; it no longer fits the definition of a PHEIC. This does not mean that the pandemic itself is over, but the global emergency is by now lifted. A Review Committee to be established will develop a long-term, standing recommendations for countries on how to manage Covid-19 on an ongoing basis.

60. Dr. Surachai provided a current guideline for treatment of Covid-19 patients, who do not have any symptoms or have mild symptoms as follows:

- Patients who have positive ATK but do not have any symptoms: no need to take any antiviral medicine
- Patients with mild symptoms and do not have any risk factors/chronic diseases should be symptomatically treated as out-patient. Antiviral medicine is not needed.

- Patients with mild symptoms but have risk factors/chronic diseases should be treated with antiviral medicine.

61. Risk factors and chronic diseases are as follows:

- More than 60 years of age
- Morbid obesity
- Heart, chest, liver, brain, and kidney diseases
- Uncontrolled diabetes
- Cancer patients undergoing treatment

62. There are two types of antiviral medicine. One is the oral medicine called Paxlovid, which is the combination of nirmatrelvir and ritonavir. The second one is the intravenous Remdesivir, which must be given consecutively for 3 days. Both antiviral medicines must be given within 5 days of showing symptoms. Dr. Surachai recommended the intravenous Remdesivir as a better antiviral medicine providing a good result and having less drug interactions than Paxlovid.

2. Concluding remarks

63. In concluding, the President expressed once again his deep appreciation and gratitude to all participants who attended in person this annual session of AFICS-T. He was also particularly pleased to see that numbers of AFICS-T members followed the proceedings of 2023 AGA online. In this connection, he would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thanks the staff from Conference Management Unit for their support and technical assistance.

64. As there was no further business for discussion, the 2023 Annual General Assembly was adjourned at 11.30 hours.

Suraphon Songweera
President, AFICS-T 2019-2021/2023