



ASSOCIATION OF FORMER INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SERVANTS – THAILAND



REPORT OF THE 2024 ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY (Thursday, 15 August 2024)

1. The 2024 Annual General Assembly (2024 AGA) of the Association of Former International Civil Servants – Thailand (AFICS-T) was held on Thursday , 15 August 2024, in Conference Room 4 of the United Nations Conference Centre, Bangkok. Altogether 98 participants registered and attended the Meeting - 74 persons onsite and 24 persons online. As the quorum of at least 80 members of the Association has been attained (Article IV, para, 4 of the Bylaws), the Meeting was convened as scheduled.

2. Mr. Suraphon Songweera, President of AFICS-T, called the Meeting to order at 09.20 hours. He expressed his deep appreciation to Mr. Hirohito Toda, the Deputy Executive Secretary for Partnership and Coordination of ESCAP for his presence at the Meeting and thanked all members who had made their efforts to attend the 2024 AGA. He also welcomed those members who participated in the meeting online. He then invited Mr. Hirohito Toda to address and officially open the 2024 Annual General Assembly.

Agenda item 1. Address of Mr. Hirohito Toda, Deputy Executive Secretary for Partnership and Coordination of ESCAP

3. In his opening remarks, Mr. Hirohito Toda expressed his sincere appreciation to Mr. Suraphon Songweera, the President of AFICS-T, for inviting ESCAP to officiate at the opening ceremony of the 2024 Annual General Assembly of the Association. He was pleased to convey the warmest greetings from the Executive Secretary of ESCAP to all participants.

4. He noted that AFICS-T had already reached 23 years of voluntary services this year. Active volunteers had served the UN retiree community, protecting the benefits and representing the interest of retirees, their spouses and dependents concerning UN pensions, life and health insurance matters. AFICS-T also supported and coordinated with the Division of Administration of ESCAP Secretariat to serve the needs of all UN retirees and their spouses living in Thailand. He further emphasized that fostering strong partnership had always been one of ESCAP priorities. Thus, the existing good relationships with all stakeholders of the organization including retirees would be maintained.

5. He then informed the meeting that ESCAP had hosted the 54th Session of the world-wide Federation of Association of Former International Civil Servants (FAFICS) on 22-25 July 2024. A letter of appreciation from Mr. Jerry Barton was sent to ESCAP for the supports provided to FAFICS. ESCAP also had the honour to host the 78th Session of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Board in Bangkok from 30 July to 2 August 2024. Various important pension issues including funding policy, pension administration and investment were reviewed. Moreover, with

the support of ESCAP, UNJSPF Liaison Office had been set up in Bangkok since 2021 to provide direct interaction with the Fund for 14,000 UNJSPF members and 9,000 retirees beneficiaries in Asia-Pacific region.

6. At the end of his remarks, Mr. Hirohito Toda, on behalf of the ESCAP Secretariat, expressed his profound gratitude to AFICS-T for providing advisory services and assistance to UN retirees and pre-retiring staff on pensions, residence, health insurance and other related matters. He then wished the 2024 AGA a successful meeting.

Agenda item 2. Statement by the AFICS-T President

7. The President, on behalf of the AFICS-T Board, welcomed Representatives from UN agencies in Bangkok, Chairman of MAF, and all AFICS-T members to the 2024 AGA. He then expressed his appreciation to Mr. Hirohito Toda for his opening remarks that was heartening and would definitely stimulate our energy to provide services to members. He mentioned that words alone could not express our deep appreciation for the facilities provided by the ESCAP Administration for AFICS-T. Joint collaborative efforts in assisting UN retirees could be nurtured and strengthened. Deep appreciation was expressed to the ESCAP Administration, Human Resources Management Section, Conference Management Unit, ESCAP Staff Council and the MAF Executive Committee. The most important of all was the UNJSPF Bangkok Liaison Officer, Mr. Brian Casatelli and his Benefits Assistant, Ms. Vena Ongalo. Those mentioned offices supported AFICS-T in its activities and services to members. Good relationships with all its counterparts would be maintained and strengthened.

8. The President reiterated that AFICS-T would continue its assistance to all members and their family members in resolving various issues related to pension fund, medical insurance and other related matters. He further informed that Board Members, Advisers, and Duty Officers would be willing to assist all members and their families whenever they needed any assistance.

9. The President also reported about the 54th Council Meeting of Federation of Associations of Former International Civil Servants (FAFICS) which was conducted in Bangkok from 22 to 25 July 2024 and followed by the 78th Session of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Board from 30 July to 2 August 2024. The outcomes of both events would be reported under the relevant agenda items.

10. The President also expressed his sincere appreciation to all Executive Board Members, Advisers, Duty Officers and those working behind the scene for their voluntary services to AFICS-T members. He further mentioned that AFICS-T office was open to welcome more members to voluntary work for AFICS-T.

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

Agenda item 3. Adoption of the Agenda

12. The President invited the Meeting to consider the provisional agenda for any proposal for change or inclusion of additional items. One participant proposed to the Meeting to shift the important issue on the amendments of Bylaws which was under Agenda item 6 to Agenda item 4 and the Agenda items had been rearranged as follows:

1. Address of the Deputy Executive Secretary of ESCAP
2. Statement by the AFICS-T President
3. Adoption of the Agenda
4. Consideration of proposed amendments of relevant Bylaws regarding the streamlining the process of the election of members of the Executive Board
5. Consideration of AFICS-T activities undertaken during the period July 2023 to June 2024 (as contained in the attached Annual Report of the Executive Board)
6. Questions and Answers
7. Brief report of the 54th Council session of FAFICS and 78th session of the Board Meeting of UNJSPF (30 July-2 August 2024)
8. Recommendations of activities to be undertaken by AFICS-T
9. Other matters

Agenda item 4. Consideration of proposed amendments of relevant Bylaws regarding the streamlining the process of the election of members of the Executive Board

13. The Vice-President, on behalf of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Bylaws Amendments, briefed the meeting about the proposed amendments of AFICS-T Bylaws, Article V, item 1, 2, and 3 and the new item 4 for the consideration by members. He referred to the election of the Executive Board every two years and expressed his concern about the difficulty to enlist volunteers to be members of the Board. Moreover, most of present Board members had been serving for over 15-20 years and if there were no new volunteers to carry on voluntary work for AFICS-T, there seemed to have a very dim future for the Association. This would very likely lead to the situation where AFICS-T might have to be dissolved.

14. Consideration of the amendments of Bylaws, Article V, it would be useful and timely to explore the possibility to streamline the process of the election of Executive Board members in 2025. Thus, an Ad Hoc Working Group was established to address this concern. The Working Group came up with two proposals with proposed changes and amendments to streamline the election process of the Executive Board. After having considered various proposals for the amendment of the Bylaws, the Board agreed to the one that was being submitted for consideration and approval of the 2024 AGA.

15. Great concerns were expressed by a participant about the role of an adviser on the decision-making process of the Board in finalizing the proposal for the Bylaws Amendments. He also expressed concern about the clause “dissolution” of AFICS-T, which was described in the new item 4 of the proposed Bylaws Amendments.

16. After a long discussion among members on this issue, it was unanimously agreed that AFICS-T had been an important association for its members and their family members. It was believed that every effort would have to be exerted NOT to allow the dissolution of the Association to happen. After the proposed Amendments was put up for decision, the Meeting agreed to approve the revised items 1, 2, 3 and the addition of sub-item (i)(new) under item 11 of Article V, as proposed. The meeting did not endorse the new item 4 of the proposed Bylaws Amendments.

Agenda item 5. Consideration of AFICS-T activities undertaken during the period July 2023 to June 2024

17. In introducing this agenda item, the President expressed his sincere appreciation to the Chairpersons and Co-Chairpersons of 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. He highlighted all activities in brief to members for information.

1. Executive Board of AFICS-T

18. The current Executive Board (2023-2025) of AFICS-T was elected at 2023 Annual General Assembly in July 2023. There had been no change concerning the composition of the Board since July 2023.

2. Summary of Financial report

19. Ms. Panvipa Thammakoranonta, Auditor, had completed the auditing of all accounts of AFICS-T and the final audited financial statement of account for the period 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024 was distributed at the Meeting. The President expressed his sincere appreciation to Ms. Panvipa for her voluntary auditing services of all AFICS-T accounts on a free of charge basis. The meeting was informed that Ms. Panvipa had been auditing the accounts of AFICS-T for many years and was familiar with the accounting system of AFICS-T.

20. As reported in the first financial statement, i.e., the balance sheet of the Association, the current total assets of AFICS-T stood at Baht 3,245,925.57 out of which Baht 2,194,328.57 were deposited with the Siam Commercial Bank (SCB), Baht 1,046,597.00 were deposited with Mutual Assistance Fund (MAF), and Baht 5,000.00 had been held on hand as petty cash.

3. Summary of activities

21. The President drew the attention of the Meeting to the summary of activities and assistance rendered to members through various Committees and Sub-Committees. The Executive Board was pleased to report that most of its activities could be implemented after the recovery from severe Covid-19 pandemic. He ensured the delivery of assistance and carried out priority activities required for members. The President then highlighted major activities and services undertaken during the reporting period July 2023 to June 2024.

3.1 Committee on Pension and Group Life Insurance Benefits

22. The President informed the Meeting about the increase of 3.4 per cent cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) to the US dollar track of periodic benefits effective 1 April 2024. There was no adjustment on the cost of living for retirees on the local track. All beneficiaries who registered for access to their UNJSPF Member Self-Service (MSS) account would be able to access their COLA letters in MSS under the “Document” tab.

23. At the global town hall on 4 April 2024, Ms. Rosemarie McClean, Chief Executive of Pension Administration, highlighted the Fund’s modernizing efforts of the past years under an unstable economic and high-inflation environment. She confirmed that “the Fund is well-funded, and the purchasing power of pensions is protected with cost-of-living adjustments”.

24. Regarding the investment of the assets of the Fund, it was informed that the Fund’s portfolio was in good health and continued to provide steady short and long-term returns with very conservative risk levels. After the value of the Fund’s assets significantly recovered with a preliminary annual increase in the market value of assets by 10.4 per cent from 2022, the total portfolio value reached US\$ 94.5 billion as at 12 July 2024.

25. The AFICS-T Executive Board continued in assisting pensioners and spouses in contacting UNJSPF on all matters related to periodic benefits, disabled child benefit, spouse benefit, two-track pension adjustment system, change of mailing addresses and bank accounts, etc. Upon request, the Executive Board also assisted spouses of the deceased members in approaching HRMS for the drafting and submission of necessary documents to UNJSPF for the processing and conversion from “pension benefit” to “spouse benefit”, as well as group life insurance reimbursement. The Executive Board would like to place on record our appreciation to the Mr. Brian Casatelli, Bangkok Liaison Officer of UNJSPF in this respect.

3.2 Sub-Committee on Certificates of Entitlement (CE)

26. The Sub-Committee on Certificate of Entitlement continued its assistance to AFICS-T members on issues relevant to the Certificate of Entitlement (CE). Details of assistance provided during the reporting period were as follows:

(a) The Sub-Committee assisted members in collecting and submitting their paper-based 2024 CE to UNJSPF. During the reporting period, the number of paper CEs submitted through the association had decreased due to the availability of online submissions and the use of the DCE Application.

(b) AFICS-T would also continue its effort to assist UNJSPF in follow up missing CEs of retirees/beneficiaries living in Thailand upon notification.

27. In this regard, the Sub-Committee on Certificate of Entitlement would urge retirees/beneficiaries to regularly contact UNJSPF for up-to-date information. The President wishes to take this opportunity to express his appreciation to the efforts of members of the Sub-Committee on CE for their work in discharging their duty under the leadership of Khun Somkoon Antanai.

3.3 Committee on Medical Benefits

28. Cigna remained the third-party administrator of the United Nations Health Insurance Plan for both the World Wide Plan (WWP) and the Medical Insurance Plan (MIP). There were no further changes in the reimbursement rules, nor in the entitlement ceilings in both plans. The meeting of the President and members of Sub-Committees on MIP and WWP with Ms. Sasha Samuel, Cigna Regional Representative for Asia was held on 27 March 2024. Several issues of concern were presented for her attention.

29. Ms. Samuel informed the meeting about the structural changes within Cigna and also recommended that AFICS-T members should continue maintaining contacts with Cigna Kuala Lumpur. All the points raised at the meeting would be briefed to her Cigna colleagues for attention. Regular consultations between Ms. Sasha and AFICS-T both in person and online would continue to be undertaken. Her next visit was planned to take place in December 2024.

30. AFICS-T also approached ESCAP/HRMS about the procedure and coverage of UN Medical Insurance to surviving spouses. Since September 2023 under the new procedure, the surviving spouse had to fill in a registration form to be submitted to ASHI. The title of the form is “Application for After Service Health Insurance (ASHI) & Pension Fund Deduction of Premiums”. That form is available once you search for “un ashi form”. The request had to be undertaken within two months (for MIP) and three months (for WWP) from the date of the decease of the retiree.

31. Consequently, detailed information was provided to AFICS-T memberships at large through the issuance of Newsletter No.4 on 26 January 2024 as well as via email and LINE group. A sample of the required registration form was also attached to the Newsletter. This information was also posted on the AFICS-T website.

3.4 Committee on Information and Communication

32. The Committee on Information and Communication continued keeping and updating registration records of AFICS-T members. Distribution of information via Newsletter to all members through electronic as well as postal mailing channels was carried out. Information was also posted on the website www.aficsthailand.com for worldwide distribution. Urgent matters were being conveyed to members via Line group of “AFICS-T Official Information ONLY”.

33. During the reporting period, AFICS-T issued, on a regular basis, five “Circulars/Newsletters” with a view to keeping members informed about issues and activities that would be of concern and interest to them. Those circulars/ Newsletters were also posted on the official AFICS-T website.

3.5 Committee on Benevolent Fund and Funerals

34. The Committee on Benevolent Fund continued supporting services to members upon request from the Benevolent Fund. There were neither contributions nor requests from members during the reporting period, 1 July 2023 to 31 May 2024. As of 7 June 2024, the Fund had a balance of Baht 208,427.73 of which Baht 313.50 was the interest income from the Siam Commercial Bank (SCB) for this period.

35. The President reminded the meeting of the funeral subsidy of THB 2,000 as a token financial contribution and THB 1,000.00 for the cost of a wreath from AFICS-T. Due to the increased cost of funeral expenses, the Board agreed to change the token to THB 3,000 without granting the wreath to the deceased family member. Such information was communicated to AFICS-T members via Newsletter No. 2 on 10 October 2023.

36. During July 2023 to June 2024, 11 members of AFICS-T passed away. AFICS-T granted a funeral subsidy of Baht 3,000.00 to each deceased family member, as follows: Ms. Tippawan Na Lumpoon, UNICEF (13 October 2023), Ms. Thongsuk Chemsai (spouse of Mr. Poey Chemsai, ESCAP) 22 October 2023, Ms. Malinee Dookchitra, ESCAP (18 November 2023), Mr. Cengiz Ertuna, ESCAP (07 March 2024), Ms. Sermsuk Kittikosana (spouse of Mr. Thaweesak Kittikosana, ESCAP), (07 March 2024), Mr. Tanakorn Mondhatuplin (spouse of Ms. Saisuri Mondhatuplin, (UNDP) (29 March 2024), Mr. Dej Preteepasen, ESCAP (26 April 2024), Ms. Diana Mills Aryee, ESCAP (07 May 2024), Ms. Manee Anekbun, UNICEF (12 May 2024), Mr. Whatana Bulsuk, ESCAP (15 June 2024), and Mr. Veerapong Roongruangmanirat, UNEP (16 June 2024).

37. As per normal practice, AFICS-T had provided the token financial contributions to the deceased family members. The President then called the meeting for a traditional minute of silence to observe the remembrance of those deceased members.

3.6 Committee on Recreation and Excursion

38. During the period under review, the Committee on Recreation and Excursion organized an excursion to the Si Thep Historical Park, Petchaboon province, from 18 to 20 February 2024. Altogether, there were 32 retirees and their family members participating in the trip. The trip focused on discovering the beauty of the Si Thep Historical Park at Umper NamNow, Petchaboon Province, a new World Heritage site announced by UNESCO. The group also visited the Petchaboon Geopark and learned that an extensive area of coffee plants had been destroyed by wildfire.

39. As the trip was the first activity of the Committee of Recreation and Excursion as well as the Committee on Charity after the Covid-19 pandemic, it was considered as a very successful activity of AFICS-T on two accounts. First, it provided the occasion for renewed social interaction and camaraderie among retirees and then bringing out an educational element to the participants of the excursion, especially in meeting members of the Arabica Coffee Community and sharing their ordeal.

40. The Committee on Recreation and Excursion acknowledged the appraisal from the participants in organizing an excellent trip to Si Thep Historical Park.

3.7 Committee on Charity Activities

41. In connection with the AFICS-T's excursion trip to the Si Thep Historical Park, Petchaboon Province in February 2024, members of the Committee on Charity, who had joined the excursion, felt very sad by such a desolated situation which had befallen on the Coffee Plantation managed by the Arabica Coffee Community. They, therefore, proposed to make a financial donation of Thai Baht 30,000.- subject to the approval of AFICS-T Executive Board. Accordingly, the Committee on Charity Activities unanimously endorsed the recommendation and submitted the proposal to the AFICS-T Board for consideration, which was approved at its 8th meeting on 8 March 2024. The donation was to assist the Arabica Coffee Community, an important Community's reforestation" project in Thailand. The AFICS-T's donation would be used to support the Community in procuring the much-needed medical supplies and wildfire extinguishing equipment for the villagers and its community members. It was noted that the donation would not only help the Arabica Coffee Community to recover from the wildfire incident faster, but also encourage that Community to maintain strong determination to continue its reforestation efforts - which was one of the options for slowing-down the on-going global warming and extreme climate change.

3.8 Committee on Foreigners Living in Thailand (FLiT)

42. Due to time running short from the prolonged discussion on the Bylaws revision and moving up of the agenda from position 6 to 4, the FLiT presentation concentrated only on the income tax issue. The other items, e.g. the local health insurance requirement for Non-immigrant "OA" despite their already existing After-Service-Health-Insurance (ASHI) covered by Cigna and others, the Long Term Residence (LTR) visa and end-of-life arrangements in Thailand for foreigner had already been dealt with in the annual report and no new developments could be presented.

43. Regarding the changed taxations regulation on foreign remittances that went into force from 1 January 2024, this could affect all UN retirees, Thai and foreign alike. In the absence of binding announcements from the Revenue Department (RD) it was the assessment of FLiT that pensions in general and those from the UN in particular would not be the target of this change in regulations. This was also the opinion of tax lawyers familiar with the issue. Since the implementation of any new measures would start from 2025, it is expected that clarifications may not be obtained much before the end of 2024. Since the issue has raised an extensive debate in retirees' circles, FLiT will keep a keen eye on the issue and report any new developments to the membership at large.

4. Report on memberships with FAFICS

44. AFICS-T as a member of the Federation of the Association of Former International Civil Servants (FAFICS) since July 2001, continued to pay its annual contribution which amounted in 2024 to US\$346 effected in the first quarter of 2024.

Agenda item 6. Questions and Answers

45. The President opened the floor for participants to intervene on any issues of concern following the presentation of activities undertaken during the period July 2023-June 2024.

46. One participant raised up the issue on financial assistance to the deceased family (about the level of subsidy to the deceased family members) amounting to Baht 3,000, without any wreath of AFICS-T at the funeral. It was clarified that the proposal to replace the cost of Bath 1,000 for the wreath to increase the token financial contribution from 2,000 to Bath 3,000 was proposed by the participant at the 2023 AGA. It was approved at the Board Meeting in October 2023 and all members were informed in the Newsletter No.2 dated 10 October 2023.

47. Regarding pension fund issues, the participant reported to the meeting about the difficulties and technical problems in contacting UNJSPF in New York. AFICS-T was requested to contact Mr. Brian Casatelli, Bangkok Liaison Officer of UNJSPF for any possibility to get consultation or clarification from him personally.

Agenda item 7. Brief report of the 54th Council session of FAFICS and the 78th Session of UNJSPF Board Meeting

48. The President briefed the Meeting about the cooperation and collaboration of AFICS-T with FAFICS at its 54th Council Meeting at the United Nations Conference Center (UNCC) in Bangkok on 22-25 July 2024. Four core areas of activities of FAFICS, namely (i) Communication, (ii) Membership, (iii) Health Insurance and Long-term Care and (iv) Pension Issues were emphasized

49. FAFICS aimed to increase the number of retiree members by the means of organizing pre-retirement seminars. A team had already been formulated to revive some dormant retiree associations. On After-Service Health Insurance and Long-term Care, FAFICS were fully aware of its limitations concerning representation in the management committees of several medical insurance schemes. They are working on assuming the role of full-fledged representation in the concerned committees of all the ASHI schemes. MIP has been the major focus of the related Standing Committee of FAFICS. An inter-agency working group on ASHI had recently been created and recently the United Nations secretariat had also set up a working group of the same nature.

50. Concerning Pension. Ms. Rosemarie McClean, Chief Executive of Pension Administration (CEPA), had shown to the recently held FAFICS Council Meeting that the value assets of the Pension Fund as at 12 July 2024 is 94.5 billion. The Pension Fund was highly secure and there was no worry about the viability of the Fund for the next 20 to 30 years. The CEPA noted that the funds' population is aging, increasing in the age category of over 90.

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

51. One participant thanked the Board for the organization of the first excursion, after the COVID pandemic, to Si Thep Historical Park, Petchaboon. All participants were very pleased to have the opportunity to enjoy the trip together with other colleagues of AFICS-T. They were looking forward to joining the next trip of AFICS-T in the near future. The President took note of the request and would further discuss this matter in the upcoming Board meeting.

52. One member proposed that AFICS-T should also share in the main group Line the information of the deceased for both members and NON-MEMBERS of AFICS-T. This would be considered by the Executive Board when it meets at its next session. Information about the change of benefits under WWP and no change for MIP had been shared to the meeting. However, those updated information could be searched in the description of benefits under each plan. Information about hospitalization, palliative care, claims for vaccination, problems in contacting Cigna were shared among members at the meeting.

Agenda item 9. Concluding remarks

53. In concluding, the President expressed once again his deep appreciation and gratitude to all participants who attended this annual session of AFICS-T in person. He was also particularly pleased to see that numbers of AFICS-T members followed the proceedings of 2024 AGA online. In this connection, he would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank the staff from Conference Management Unit for their support and technical assistance.

54. As there was no further business for discussion, the 2024 Annual General Assembly was adjourned at 12.00 hours.

Suraphon Songweera
President, AFICS-T, 2023-2025