1. Introduction

In the last two years there have been many developments, including a change of office holders. According to the Statutes, four years is the time limit for any office holder, and consequently all office holders had to change. Jean-Paul Menu stepped down as President in October 2014 and Dev Ray took his place. The other changes in the Bureau are mentioned in Section 2 below.

The developments during this period have mainly been positive, not necessarily all related to AFSM efforts: in the governance of SHI and the implementation of the new software system in our Pension Fund – still in process. Support from the Organization has held steady and we are grateful to the Administration. The biggest negative aspect has been the lack of volunteers to join the Executive Committee since we badly need new candidates.

As of 1 August, our membership stood at 948 life members and 90 annual paid-up members. As before, we strongly encourage life membership since it absolves members from remembering to pay their dues and reduces the tasks of our Treasurer to remind members. We welcome conversions from annual to life membership at any time and shall be pleased to advise you on the balance to pay since a part of your past annual contributions counts towards life membership.

2. Election of the Executive Committee

In May 2014 we made a call for candidates to stand for elections to the Executive Committee for the period November 2014 to October 2016. The Committee consists of 12 members and we received effectively 12 candidatures. When the number of candidates is equal to the number of seats available, the Executive Committee can, with the approval of the Polling Officers, declare them elected without proceeding to a vote. Unfortunately, the only new candidate - François Trambelland - resigned a couple of months later and we have continued with 11 elected, one co-opted and one honorary member and three honorary Presidents.

According to the Statutes, none of the office holders in the Committee can continue in his/her post for more than four years continuously. Although no candidate was initially forthcoming for the office of the President, Dev Ray was finally elected in December 2014. This Article 7 has created problems in trying to fit in, sometimes artificially, previous office holders into other functions. We are therefore proposing to amend this article so that the provision of limitation of four continuous years of office-holding applies only to the President and will thus enable him/her to select, subject to approval by the whole Executive Committee, the rest of the office holders.
The proposed amended text of Article 7 is shown below – the change is marked in bold in the last sentence:

“The Executive Committee shall elect from among its members a bureau composed of a President, two Vice-Presidents, a Treasurer and an Assistant Treasurer, and an Administrator\(^1\) for a period of two years, provided that no office holder occupies more than one of these posts. They may be re-elected every two years, with the provision that the maximum duration of continuous mandate for the President shall be four years.”

The composition of the Bureau for 2014-2016 is:

- **President**  Dev Ray
- **Vice-Presidents**  Jean-Paul Menu and David Cohen
- **Treasurer**  Maria Dweggah
- **Vice-Treasurer**  Anne Yamada
- **Administrator**  Sue Block Tyrrell

The other members of the Executive Committee are Yves Beigbeder, Laura Ciaffei, Pascale Gilbert-Miguet, Roberto Masironi and Ann Van Hulle-Colbert. Rosemary Villars kindly agreed to join us as a co-opted member. Samy Kossovsky is an Honorary Member. Among the Honorary Presidents, Roger Fontana and Alain Vessereau attend the meetings regularly.

The members of the Committee share responsibilities for its activities:

**SHI issues:** Ann Van Hulle-Colbert and Jean-Paul Menu

**WHO Staff Pension Committee:** Dev Ray and Pascale Gilbert-Miguet as Observers

*Quarterly News:*

Chief Editor: David Cohen  
Editorial Committee: Yves Beigbeder, Sue Block Tyrrell, Laura Ciaffei, Maria Dweggah, Samy Kossovsky, Lindsay Martinez, Jean-Paul Menu, Dev Ray and Rosemary Villars.

We try to do our best to respond to enquiries but members should remember that we offer our services on a voluntary basis without compensation and sometimes there are delays due to our personal commitments.

### 3. Services provided by the AFSM

A new retiree joins the Association for a variety of reasons – foremost among them:

- A sense of solidarity with the Organization and colleagues;
- To keep in touch with colleagues and activities through the *Quarterly News* (QNT) and the *Directory*;
- To obtain help when necessary.

We continue to help our members confronted with problems and some recent illustrative examples are given below:

- a member was taken ill in Thailand and was unconscious in hospital; his wife and son knew little about his health insurance and wrote to us for help; in

\(^1\) The addition of the function of Administrator was agreed at the 2011 General Assembly
collaboration with SHI we could uncover his details and communicate them to his family;
- at the request of a daughter we could guide the family of a member to find a residence for seniors in neighbouring France;
- on a phone call in Russian from a member from Russia, we could guide him to the appropriate service to obtain an attestation of his service with WHO;
- on request of relatives or friends, we often try to trace the whereabouts of members with whom they have lost contact;
- we have helped in filling out health insurance claims for elderly members unable to do so on their own, etc.

The second type of service is in representing our collectivity in front of UN bodies such as the Pension Board. Through participation in the delegation of the Association of Former International Civil Servants (AFICS), Geneva, to the Federation of Associations of Former International Civil Servants (FAFICS), we can influence our collective stands in the Pension Board on issues of importance to retirees (see also 7d below).

AFSM members may wish to encourage their friends who are not members to join the Association.

4. Pensions

The volatility in the international financial market continues. However the markets showed solid returns in 2014 and consequently the investments of the Pension Fund are at an all-time high – around USD 54 billion. The Fund’s investments are managed by the Investment Management Division of the United Nations while the operations of the pension disbursements are handled by the Secretariat of the Fund. The actuarial valuation of the Fund at the end of 2014 shows an actuarial deficit of 0.74%. Since it is accepted that, with all the assumptions made regarding life expectancy and future rates of return on investments, there is a latitude of error of up to 2%, the deficit is not alarming: it is an improvement from the 1.87% deficit estimated two years ago – due primarily to the raising of the retirement age to 65 for new recruits to the UN system. The UN Secretary-General has appointed Carol Boykin of the USA as his representative to the Investments Committee and Sergio Arvizú continues to be the CEO of the Fund.

There have been a lot of public exchanges of charges and counter-charges by some representatives of UN staff – many of these charges are claimed to be baseless. For example, claims have been made that the CEO of the Fund wants to control its investments or that active investments in hedge funds are being considered. However, these unfounded charges create an atmosphere of uncertainty and concern among retirees. We have tried to keep our members informed and will remain vigilant.

The Pension Fund is introducing a new information management system – which should integrate the whole process of estimating benefits, paying the pensions and making adjustments on the basis of cost-of-living changes. But these IT systems often have some teething problems.

We would like to remind members of the importance of informing the Fund of any change in country of residence (especially for those on local track), change of address or bank details and, of course, to return rapidly the Certificates of Entitlement due in October/November every year.
We bring up questions of interest to retirees in the WHO Pension Committee and also influence them to raise relevant points in the Pension Board.

5. **Staff Health Insurance (SHI)**

Since 2012, the governance of the SHI consists of two committees, namely the Global Oversight Committee (GOC) and the Global Standing Committee (GSC). As a result of the changes introduced at that time, the representatives of retired staff to the SHI Committees are no longer designated by the AFSM Executive Committee but are chosen through general election by all retired staff participating in the SHI. At the end of December 2012, the following persons were elected for 2 years starting September 2013:

- **GOC**: Ann Van Hulle-Colbert (member) and Clas Sandström (alternate)
- **GSC**: Marjory Dam and Jean-Paul Menu (members), Carol Collado and Françoise Héry-Persin (alternates)

A new election took place in July 2015, this time for a 4 year mandate, and we are happy to note that all the previous incumbents have been re-elected. We are fortunate that a member on the GOC and a member on the GSC are members of our AFSM Executive Committee. Three others are members of AFSM while another (Carol Collado) is a member of AFSM-Washington. This enables us to exchange views and information which are mutually beneficial.

As Ann and Jean-Paul are also responsible for dealing with SHI matters on our Executive Committee, they have helped a number of our members to sort out problems related to the health insurance. The AFSM office is frequently contacted on matters related to health insurance and we are pleased to be able to help. Having said that, we never substitute ourselves for the SHI Secretariat. If the matter should be dealt with directly by the Secretariat, we always recommend that our members address themselves to SHI. We may also advise members to ask for a review of their case by the GSC, it being understood that we take care to avoid conflicts of interest and to observe strict confidentiality. Finally, in case of any problems or in matters where we can be of assistance, our members are welcome to contact us.

You will have noted from the *Quarterly News* that, from time to time, we try to clarify the rules on which we receive frequent queries. For instance, we recently wrote on catastrophic expenses. We would also like to draw your attention to paragraph 207 (Place of Treatment) as the provisions related to treatment in the USA and Canada for persons other than those whose recognized nationality/place of residence or duty station is within the Americas’ region, were recently revised. This may be relevant to many of our retired staff who seek treatment in the USA/Canada when visiting their family there. These are but two examples of SHI provisions on which we are consulted for clarification.

We are pleased to say that we enjoy excellent relations with the SHI Secretariat. Our members appreciate the fact that claims are settled promptly and that the Help Desk is there to assist with any queries they may have. Our sincere thanks go to all the members of SHI and their Chiefs – Samantha Bell-Shiers and Claude Hennetier Rossier. We are happy to note that the Global Oversight Committee will undertake a study on long-term care options with the assistance of a consultant. We look forward to the outcome of this important work in due course.
6. Information and communication

The Executive Committee continues its efforts to facilitate communication with its members. We owe a debt of gratitude to a few members for their extensive work, although others have also contributed. First and foremost is David Cohen, our editor of the Quarterly News (QNT) – at a cost of considerable amount of his time. Next are Sue Block Tyrrell, Jean-Paul Menu and Anne Yamada who have been instrumental in keeping up to date the correspondence, Information Notes, website and the Directory. We are also very grateful to WHO for continuing to cover the costs of printing and postal dispatches. If you have an e-mail address and have not yet communicated the details to us, please do so since we are relying more and more on electronic communication.

(a) Quarterly News

The Quarterly News (QNT) represents the main link with our members. We have just celebrated the 100th issue and the 101st will be published shortly. It became the main source for the Committee’s information since its first issue in 1990, with Peter Ozorio as editor, who was in charge for 50 issues before David Cohen took over.

We strive to make it as informative as possible, with a medical article, news on health insurance and pensions, on WHO, news from our sister regional associations of former staff, obituaries, and much more. It is sent regularly to all members of the AFSM, but all former WHO staff can read it on our website.

The QNT, according to the echoes that come to us, is very popular. However, we would like greater participation of readers. Please do not hesitate to send us your comments, good or bad, and to send us stories of personal experiences or events that you would like to share with your colleagues.

(b) Information notes

We have continued our electronic Information Notes and other messages – for disseminating various news and events such as the General Assembly and influenza vaccinations.

(c) Website

Our website is regularly updated and contains all the past and current information, including all the issues of the QNT.

(d) Directory

Our 2015 Directory, single-handedly prepared by Anne Yamada, was sent out in April and all changes notified to us will be integrated into the next edition. Its distribution is strictly limited to paid-up members and, for reasons of confidentiality, it is not posted on the AFSM website. Please communicate to us any change in your details.

(e) Pre-retirement seminars

We continue to take part in pre-retirement seminars held annually at WHO/HQ and do our best to encourage upcoming retirees to join the AFSM.

7. Relationships with other associations and programmes

(a) WHO Staff Association

We enjoy excellent relations with the WHO Staff Association which also helps us by providing services to reserve rooms or to acquire office equipment. The Staff Association
Secretariat has been of immense help to us – not only in providing support for the purchase of computers but also by being ever-ready to help us deal with problems in using them.

(b) WHO programmes

We have established excellent relations with some of the programmes such as Mental Health which last March convened a Ministerial Conference on Dementia – a topic of interest to our members.

(c) Former WHO staff in the Regions

We maintain close relations with the association of PAHO former staff in Washington DC, and the AFSM-Manila recently created by Romy Murillo. We have close relations with Jill Conway-Fell in Copenhagen who represents the interests of former UN and WHO-EURO staff. We continue our efforts to strengthen our collaboration with AFSM-SEARO. We welcome the creation of AFSM-AFRO under the leadership of Kalula Kalambay. Jean-Paul Menu has been the driving force in these efforts.

(d) Association of Former International Civil Servants in Geneva (AFICS)

Our relations with AFICS continue to be excellent. Odette Foudral continues to be the President of AFICS, Geneva. Three members of our Executive Committee (Yves Beigbeder, David Cohen and Dev Ray) are also elected members of AFICS and Stanislas Flache, Roger Fontana and Samy Kossovsky are Honorary Members. Jean-Paul Menu and Sue Block Tyrrell attend many of the meetings on behalf of the AFSM. To the extent possible, a member of the AFSM Executive Committee attends the annual meetings of the Federation of Associations of Former International Civil Servants (FAFICS) as part of the AFICS, Geneva delegation. In 2014 the FAFICS meeting was held at FAO/HQ in Rome and Jean-Paul Menu attended. In July 2015 it was held in the UN, Geneva, hosted by AFICS and three of us participated in the deliberations. In 2015 there were Q&A sessions with the CEO of the Pension Fund – Sergio Arvizú – and with the UN SG’s Representative to the Investment Committee – Carol Boykin. The discussions touched on many subjects including the charges and counter-charges against the Pension Fund and efforts to change UN retirees’ health insurance.

(e) Other associations

AFSM continues to attend the meetings of the Plate-forme des Associations d’Aînés of Geneva of which the AFSM is a member. Roger Fontana plays a key role in these contacts along with David Cohen. AFSM also has close ties with the British Association of Former UN Civil Servants (BAFUNCS) and Sue Block Tyrrell usually attends its annual reunion.

AFSM, jointly with the ILO association of former staff and AFICS, Geneva, convened a seminar on isolation in 2014 that was very well-attended.

8. Social activities

(a) Annual reception

Last year’s reception was organized in October 2014 – a move away from the usual December date. It was a great success and many of the participants appreciated the opportunity to come in the autumn when daylight is longer and the weather is less extreme. Again, a contribution of CHF 15 was requested from each participant. This year, as an
experiment, we are holding the reception on the same day as the General Assembly and we shall look forward to hearing members’ views on this arrangement.

(b) Influenza vaccination

As every year, immunization sessions against influenza (2 full days) are organized for retired members participating in the Staff Health Insurance, in collaboration with the Medical Service (now called Staff Health and Well-being Services - SHW) and SHI. These are prepared and supervised by Roger Fontana and David Cohen. These sessions are also an opportunity for former colleagues to meet up and have a chat. The number of people coming to be vaccinated is about 250 each year.

(c) Organization of trips

Each year (except this year) a group trip is organized with great success. In the past, such trips were organized by David Cohen. However, for the next trip, which will take place from 30 June to 7 July 2016, Charles Hager will take over. It will be a river cruise on the Danube. Come and join us!

9. Thanks

Our sincere thanks go to:

- The DG’s office
- The Administration including the SHI and Pensions office as well as the Printing and Distribution services
- The Medical Service (now SHW) for the influenza vaccinations
- Ms Marie-Pierre Austin for her invaluable help in the use of our mailing lists and securing the printing and mailing of our communications
- The Staff Association and its Secretariat
- The Reception and Security services for their help
- Other associations of seniors in the Geneva area and in the Regions

10. Overall conclusion

Our perception is that there seems to be a growing dichotomy of the recently retired staff and the older retirees. Perhaps with improved health and increasing longevity, recent retirees cannot see themselves becoming older or infirm and thereby needing help. Another phenomenon may be that some recent retirees have not worked in WHO for a long time and therefore feel less loyalty to the Organization and to their former colleagues. Ten or fifteen years ago, there were more retirees joining the AFSM and more candidates for the Executive Committee than places available; new members did not need to be coaxed to present themselves. If the current trend continues, and when the older generation disappears, there may not be a strong Executive Committee to look after your interests or to help you in moments of need. Do we want that? The AFSM is not alone as other associations in the area are experiencing the same issues. Perhaps some of you may have some good proposals to make. Even if some of you may not want to stand for elections, you can volunteer to be co-opted for specific tasks.