Dear Fellow Members,

It is a pleasure to connect with you again and I hope and trust you are coping well with the COVID-19 pandemic. Am pleased to update you with the following:

1. Pension Issues
   - **Certificates of Entitlements (CEs).** I hope by now you have received a note from AFICS Secretary, Ms. Phyllis Gicharu, with the good news that, owing to the pandemic, the *UN Joint Staff Pension Fund* has extended the submission of 2020 certificates of entitlement to April/May 2021. However, those who have completed theirs should go ahead and submit them.
   - **Member Self-Service (MSS).** For those who have not yet registered for MSS, it is important that you do so. If you are having a problem, please contact our Secretary, Ms. Phyllis Gicharu, or our Administrative Assistant, Anthony Odallo, to assist you.

2. UN Pension Board

Below are some of the highlights of the Board meeting:

   - **The 67th Pension Board** session was concluded on 27 July 2020 and confirmed that *UNJSPF* is in good financial health. It approved the Fund’s 2019 financial statements and 2021 administrative budget proposal. Despite COVID-19, monthly pensions for nearly 80,000 beneficiaries have been processed on time. Although pension staff have been working from home, they have continued to serve us well.
   - **2021 Budget Approval.** The Board reviewed the budget for final approval by the *United Nations General Assembly*. The budget will allow the fund to start implementing its new vision and strategy, namely, simplifying the client experience, providing a modern pension service, and building a data-driven organization with a strong, global partnership.
   - **Investment Performance.** The asset value of the Fund had increased from $61 billion at the end of 2018, to $72 billion at the end of 2019. Despite the turbulent markets in first months of 2020, the objective of a 3.5 percent real return in US Dollar over the long term has been met. Also, the investment performance will now be published on a weekly and monthly basis on the *UNJSPF* website. This is good news for us!
   - **Governance Matters.** The *General Assembly*, which is the highest legislative body governing the Fund, requested a review of the Fund’s governance in 2019 by an independent entity. The *General Assembly* wanted to know whether the Pension Fund is serving its members well. The report was presented to the Board, but it decided that its *Governance Working Group* should review the report and consult with all constituents. The *Working Group* will produce a progress report to a special session of the Pension Board, planned to convene in early 2021, before further action is taken.

3. II. COVID-19 Country Status
As of this morning, 25 August 2020, the total number of cases in Kenya is 32,557 with 18,895 recoveries (about 58%) and total deaths of 554. The cumulative number of tests to date has been 425,364. We expect the cases to continue to rise until the country reaches the tipping of the curve, projected for December all the way to January, February and March. This is according to the Ministry of Health modelling projection. However, as in any modelling exercise, things can change. This means we are not out of the woods. We have to be vigilant and continue to observe the government guidelines, especially those of us in the age bracket of 60 plus.

The challenges the country is facing include corruption and the mismanagement of funds earmarked for COVID-19, lack of reagents to continue conducting additional tests, and the non-payment of healthcare workers, some of whom have gone on strike. The Government should take these challenges seriously and ensure that it addresses them promptly.

4. **III. COVID-19 Vaccine**

Without a vaccine against COVID-19, we will continue to be in danger of the virus. There are currently 202 vaccine candidates under different stages of trial, 25 of which are undergoing clinical testing. The Oxford vaccine is on large scale clinical trial in Brazil, South Africa and the United Kingdom, while the Novavax vaccine candidate is under phase I and II clinical trial.

Further, Russia has developed a vaccine and it plans to vaccinate its citizens starting in October 2020. According to the Kremlin, it has an order of 1 billion doses from 20 countries. However, many western countries, including the United States, have questioned the Russian vaccine, specifically, its safety and effectiveness, because it is not clear whether the vaccine has been subjected to clinical trials.

Anyway, Kenya is among 92 countries shortlisted to benefit from the low-cost COVID-19 vaccine that is already on trial (the Oxford vaccine) from 2021.

5. **IV. UN Gigiri Complex**

Most of the UN complex at Gigiri remains closed until further notice. We will advise you of any change in status once we have official information.

I want to end with some quotations by two famous people, relevant to this time of staying, or working, at home and social distancing. Former US President Theodore Roosevelt once said “Do what you can, with what you have, where you are”; while Caroline Wright reminds us that “You have to find a way to respect these new boundaries (related to coronavirus), but still live the version of life you’re used to. That’s what life is, regardless of circumstance”.

I want to thank you for your continued support of our Association.

Warm regards,

*Amb. John O. Kakonge, President, AFICS-Kenya*  

25th August, 2020