Dear Fellow Members,

I hope and trust this note finds you and your loved ones safe and well during these challenging times. As part of keeping in touch, I would like to share with you the following:

1. Pension Issues

During the FAFICS virtual meeting of 11 September 2020, it was confirmed that the Pension Fund is in an excellent financial position and appears to have weathered the COVID-19 pandemic smoothly and efficiently, with pensions being delivered on time and investment returns having recovered and exceeded the low point which had occurred in the earlier part of this year. In short, FAFICS concluded that in its view it is a fantastic Fund of which we should all be proud.

2. ASHI

As you may have noted from your statements, the health insurance rates increased for both active staff and retirees effective 1 July 2020. This is to ensure that funding is set at levels to sustain each plan going forward to allow the health insurance plans to fund the expected claims and third-party costs over the forthcoming 12-month period. The details are as follows:

❖ Aetna PPO/POS: increase of 7.26 percent
❖ Empire Blue Cross IPP: increase of 9.00 percent
❖ HIP Health Plan of New York: increase of 5.97 percent
❖ UN Worldwide (Cigna International): increase of 1.00 percent
❖ Cigna US Dental PPO: increase of 1.00 percent

For more information on the 2020 schedule of premiums, click on the 2020 annual campaign link on the UN website at www.un.org/insurance.

3. COVID-19

According to the Ministry of Health, Kenya is nearing its peak. The figures have started declining. As at 28 September, the recoveries are about 24,681 and the deaths stand at 700, with the greatest number of positive cases in Nairobi, followed by Mombasa. However, at the rate things are going, the country may be faced with another surge as has happened in Europe. This is because of the disregard of the MoH guidelines by politicians. Huge political rallies are currently being held in many parts of the country every weekend and most attendees do not keep social distance or wear masks. This is very worrying and the government should address this problem immediately.

Second, as you have heard, the schools will be opening in October 2020 and the Ministry of Education has confirmed that it is prepared. It is not clear, however, whether all schools, especially those in the rural areas, will meet the school reopening COVID-19 protocols. All things considered, the government should give clear and consistent messages/communication to the parents/guardians about the school
reopening process and safely measures to be implemented so that children may confidently return to school.

4. UN Complex

There is no update to the information about the opening the UN complex for everyone. We will wait to hear from UNON on the way forward.

5. COVID-19 Vaccine

There is currently tremendous interest in the development of a vaccine, with more than a hundred efforts under way around the world. Several are looking promising and one or more may bear fruit—possibly faster than in several years. Scientists warn, however, that even if one or more vaccines emerge that promise to make people less susceptible to COVID-19, the public health problem will not be eliminated. Vaccines are not a panacea; they are but one tool in the medical arsenal. As scientists warn, no vaccine can be expected to produce complete or lasting immunity in all who take it.

The current challenge to produce one or more vaccines and distribute them around the world could require years, not months. In short, these are matters of science, manufacturing and logistics.

6. Dissolution of the Parliament

As you are aware, the Chief Justice, the Hon. David Maraga, wrote to President Kenyatta advising him to dissolve Parliament because it has failed to pass laws to ensure a two-thirds gender rule for all elective and appointive positions. The President is caught between a rock and a hard place — he either upholds the law and dissolves Parliament, or sacrifices constitutionalism at the altar of political expediency. The President is not alone, the women law-makers are split right down the middle despite pressure from their seniors outside Parliament. The elected women legislators are not guaranteed to win their seats in a future election, while their nominated colleagues would have to be reconsidered by the nominating parties. This is the same fear the men legislators also have. Regardless, the Kenya High Court has suspended the implementation of the Chief Justice’s advice to dissolve Parliament pending a hearing of the matter.

I want to end with a word of encouragement by Aron Ralston: “Everything happens for a reason, and part of that beauty of life is that we’re not allowed to know those reasons for certain.”

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

With best personal regards,

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

28th September, 2020