Dear Fellow Members of AFICS-K,

As you will appreciate, the health and safety of all our members are foremost in our minds as we move forward during this challenging COVID-19 period. In this regard, I am pleased to highlight below a few issues:

Pension issues
I am sure by now that most of you have received your 2020 Certificates of Entitlement online and, if you have signed them, our AFICS-K office has advised that you to drop them off at the pouch unit which is situated within the UN Commissary building. The deadline for submission of CEs is 45 days from the date they were released (30 June), meaning mid-August. Please ensure that you are within the deadline period.

Cigna
Given that the Cigna office at UNON is not open due to COVID-19, Cigna has recommended that you drop your claims at their office on the 12th floor, Africa Plaza Building on Waiyaki Way (opposite Westlands Mall). A letter from Cigna to this effect was circulated by our office to all our members. Also, Cigna has confirmed that in case any our members covered by them is infected by the coronavirus, all their medical bills will be covered.

COVID-19
As I indicated in my previous communication, our government hospitals are almost full with COVID-19 patients. Therefore, the government is encouraging home care for non-symptomatic patients and those with only mild symptoms. This is going to be challenging as the number of people testing positive with the coronavirus has been increasing over the last few weeks. Apart from Nairobi and Mombasa, there are now several hotspot counties, namely: Busia, Kajiado, Kiambu, Machakos, Makueni, Migori, Nakuru and Uasin Gishu. I understand that the Council of Governors may recommend a lockdown for hotspot counties. This will depend on the summit the President will be having with the 47 governors on 27 July 2020 to discuss the coronavirus disease situation in the country.

Wearing Masks
As you are aware, the issue of wearing masks has been highly politized in some countries such as Brazil, the USA, and others. In Kenya, some people are wearing masks and others don’t care, especially the youth. Unfortunately, according to some surveys, there are some people who still believe that coronavirus disease is a hoax. However, the government has recommended that everyone should wear them, especially in public. According to Dr. Sanjay Gupta, CNN chief medical correspondent, if you wear a mask the chances of contracting COVID-19 is 3.1%, but if you don’t wear one, the chances are 17.4%. In short, whether you are young or older, it is highly recommended that you wear a mask, especially in public, and keep a social distance.
**UN Hospital**

For your Information, the United Nations is putting up a 160-bed facility at the Nairobi Hospital for its staff who may become infected with COVID-19. The groundbreaking was done on 20 July and it is expected to take 5 to 8 weeks to complete. This unit will be based at the old nursing school opposite the Nairobi Hospital. The facility will offer a turnkey solution for a fully staffed, operational unit, and will be diagnostically capable of caring for patients with severe and critical respiratory infections. In addition, Silver Springs Hotel, near the Nairobi Hospital, has been set aside for any UN staff who might require isolation. The proposed hospital will serve also as an evacuation centre for UN staff within the region. According to the CEO of Nairobi Hospital, it will admit both UN and non-UN patients.

**Access to COVID-19 Vaccine**

There is great concern that once vaccines have been developed, low- and middle-income countries, including Kenya, might be put at the end of the queue to receive them. These countries were sidelined when demand for COVID-19 testing equipment and reagents shot up. They suffered an acute shortage as richer countries were given preference.

The result was a huge backlog in processing collected samples in many developing countries. There are currently discussions at regional and international level to make sure that low- and middle-income countries are not left out in terms of getting the vaccine once it has been approved for use. The most promising vaccine is the one being developed by Oxford University, which is currently under human trial in the United Kingdom, South Africa and Brazil. There is every likelihood that it may be available before the end of this year. We are crossing our fingers!

May I end with two inspirational messages. Firstly, from Rahm Emanuel, “You never want a serious crisis to go to waste. And what I mean by that, is it’s an opportunity to do things you think you could not do before”. This is true for many of us. And secondly, the former Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, reminds us that “Every little thing counts in a crisis”.

Best wishes to you and your families,


26th July, 2020