

Amb. John.O.Kakonge---Talking Points

Master of Ceremonies,

Colleagues and AFICS-Kenya Members,

Members of the Executive Committee,

I welcome you all to this General Meeting, which marks the end of the two years of the current AFICS-Kenya Executive Committee. Let me begin by highlighting our achievements and challenges.

Achievements

1. Office space

It took us three months to persuade UNON to expand our current office to incorporate the adjacent empty room. Since then, we have been requesting additional space to accommodate our consultancy services, but we have been informed that this will not be possible because of the anticipated demolition of the first structures on the compound, blocks A to E of the UN Compound. This work will take two years and will place additional pressure on all available office space on campus.

2. Changing the name of the Association

Prior to the Association's relaunch in July 2017, its small office was referred to as "UN Retirees". There were people here at the UN who felt that retirees had no business on the compound – in other words, as retirees, we should be at home taking caring of our grandchildren and tending our gardens. We immediately changed the name to AFICS-Kenya, to bring us in line with the policy of the Federation of Former International Civil Servants (FAFICS). We changed the office to AFICS-Kenya, thus raising the status and profile of our association, and since then it has been very positively received.

3. Reregistration

We reregistered AFICS-Kenya as an NGO in 2017 before its relaunch in July 2017. With the assistance of the NGO secretariat, it took only two months. We spent over Ksh.100,000 to pay both the fine and registration fees.

4. Relaunching AFICS-Kenya

After changing the name to AFICS-Kenya we thought it was necessary to relaunch the Association itself, so that people on the UN compound and those outside would be aware of what the Association did and what it stood for. We did not have the funds for this rebranding exercise, so we got to work looking for sponsors: within six weeks we raised Kshs. 1.5 million from UNON (Ksh.400,000) KCB (Ksh.400,000), Standard Chartered Bank (Ksh.250,000), UNFCU (Ksh.200,000) Monarch Insurance (Ksh.100,000) and Mohamed Muigai Advocates (Ksh.100,000). Our relaunch event was graced by the former UNON DG, now President of Ethiopia, Ms. Sahle-Work Zewdie, who was our Guest of Honour. The event was well attended, by about 150 people.

5. Establishment of AFICS-K Consultancy Services

During the relaunch, we also launched the AFICS-Kenya Consultancy Services. Since then, and despite initial challenges, AFICS-K Consultancy Services has been busy networking with various organizations and agencies. Currently, we are working with the Department of Cooperatives in the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Cooperatives. I want to take this occasion to pass on our deepest gratitude to the consultants who have volunteered to work without compensation to produce policy briefs, writing project proposals and policy documents.

6. Financial management

After our unhappy experience with our former office assistant, we are pleased to inform you that we have straightened up our accounts books. In addition, our books for 2017 were audited, and our 2018 books are in the process of being audited. In short, we now have the necessary checks and balances in place to ensure that there are no further losses of Association funds.

7. **Recruitment of new members**

According to the UN Pension Fund, Kenya has more than 1,000 UN pensioners in the country. Our vision was to increase our number of members to 300, but progress has been a bit slow. As of today, we have 200 registered members, 110 of whom are paid up and more work is needed to build our membership.

8. **Website**

We also established an AFICS-K website, which covers administrative issues and more general matters, and also has a page for our consultancy services. I encourage everyone to visit the website and, should you have any comments or suggestions, we will be very glad to hear them. So far, we've heard from people who've looked at the website that they generally find it useful and informative.

9. **Newsletter**

We've also established a newsletter and have sent out five issues so far. We encourage you to share with us any information which you think will be of interest to other members.

10. **Get-togethers**

We organized three get-togethers for our members: one in 2017 and two in 2018.

11. **Assistance to non-AFICS-K members**

We have been assisting both those who don't want to become AFICS members and those who were unaware of the existence and activities of AFICS-Kenya. The current AFICS-K Office, in collaboration with the Pension office, has been assisting retirees on both pension and medical issues, especially ASHI.

12. **Sub-Committees**

We established a number of sub-committees, namely the social events, benefits, and outreach and consultancy. The sub-committees complement the work of the Executive Committee. We urge the members to front up and fill the vacant posts so as to strengthen these sub-committees.

Challenges

1. **Recruitment of New Members**

The only sustainable means of ensuring a regular income for the Association would be by substantially increasing our membership. One challenge we face – shared by many such organizations – is that of potential members, pensioners in our case, who call at the AFICS-K office and complete the registration forms with a promise that they'll come back and pay ... but then we never see them again. It's not clear to us if it's just slipped their mind – or if there are other reasons for their non-payment. All I can do is to urge all of us who know former retirees who registered to remind them to come and pay and, in general, if among your friends there any other retirees, to tell them about the Association, the good things we are doing and want to do, and to encourage them to come on board.

2. **Commissary**

We had hoped that we would have settled this issue by this stage, but we have encountered challenges within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. We are still working on it and very much hope we can reach a satisfactory solution in the near future.

3. Grounds Passes/IDs

We have not forgotten those people who do not have ground passes/IDs. The committee should continue to engage the security office. Most of the people affected are those who retired outside the Nairobi Duty Station.

4. Sub-committees

Our subcommittees have not got under way, but they are important for the work of the Executive Committee. We strongly believe that the subcommittees should not be chaired by Executive Committee members: we are all giving up our time voluntarily and we are very busy with the Executive Committee's tasks. We therefore urge other members to come forward and offer to chair the subcommittees.

5. Office space

We need additional space for consultancy work. But as the former UNON DG noted during our get-together in November 2018, there is heavy pressure on office space at the UN campus right now, because of the planned demolition of old office blocks and the need to rehouse the occupants while a new office wing is built, which will take at least two years. In the Executive Committee we're working on this and hope to come up with a creative solution soon. We would also welcome suggestions and offers from any members or colleagues.

6. Office Staff

The AFICS office really needs a permanent administrative assistant, rather than depending, as at present, on the generous assistance of temporary interns. At present,

however, we can't commit ourselves to a full-time salary. It's our earnest hope that, with our new venture into consultancy work, AFICS-K will be able to raise sufficient funds to hire a full-time admin assistant.

7. Political stalemate

After the relaunch of the Association, for reasons beyond our control, we were inactive from August 2017 to February last year. Despite this unforeseen delay, the Executive Committee has made significant strides in the twelve months since then and we are now close to launching our consultancy services.

In conclusion

Regardless of your decision on its future composition, allow me to conclude, on behalf of the Executive Committee, by thanking all members of the Association for your support, encouragement and dedication to the work of AFICS-Kenya. It has been an honour and a privilege to serve you for the last two years. Asante Sana.

27 February 2019