



Dear Fellow Members,

This year will be remembered as an unprecedented year, one of the most difficult in recent times, and one that has affected all of our lives, in both large and small ways. I send my special greetings to you and your loved ones with the hope that you are keeping safe under the second surge of COVID-19.

Further to my update of 28 October 2020, I am happy to share with you the following:

1. Pension issues

Our office stands ready to assist you, our members, to follow up on any outstanding pension issues you may have. Our collaboration with the local pension office here at Gigiri has been excellent.

2. COVID-19 situation

Most countries across the world are experiencing a second surge of COVID-19. This is the case in Europe, the USA, Canada, Latin America and Africa. It has forced some governments to take extreme measures including lockdowns, curfews, and other restrictions.

Here in Kenya, the country has lost many people in this month of November. There were 232 deaths between 1 and 14 November. The highest number was recorded on 11 November when 26 Kenyans lost their lives. Kenya medical experts confirm that community infections and lack of access to intensive care facilities have led to an increased number of deaths. Also, the Chairman of the Council of Governors confirmed recently that counties have virtually no capacity to handle COVID-19 patients in need of critical care, and some are dying on the way to Nairobi in search of ICUs.

According to the recent report of the Health Cabinet Secretary, Hon. Kagwe, there are 1,331 patients in various hospitals across the country, while 2,843 are in homebased care. Of those who are in hospital, 59 are in ICUs. Unfortunately, as at 21 November 2020, the country has lost 12 doctors and 15 nurses to the pandemic since the outbreak of coronavirus in March 2020. One of the reasons for the high infection rates medical professionals is the rising rate of community transmission. Second, medical workers do not have enough standard personal protective equipment. Our concern is to ensure that the government is addressing the problems of the health workers who are committed to saving lives.

3. Vaccines

There is good news in that two vaccines, by Pfizer and Moderna, are about to be approved by the US government. The third candidate vaccine, from Oxford University/AstraZeneca, is in the third stage

of experimentation. In the case of Pfizer, once it receives approval, the vaccine should start to be made available in December 2020. The challenges with the Pfizer vaccine is making logistical preparations. To handle it requires stable temperatures, mobile refrigeration, sound roads and reliable electricity. Once approved, the Pfizer vaccine will require storage at -70 degrees Celsius. Unfortunately, such medical freezers are rare even in developed countries.

On the same subject, Kenya last month joined several countries included in trials of the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine candidate, which now has a 70-90 percent positive effective rate depending on the mode of vaccination. The trial is being hosted by the Kenya Medical Research Institute (KEMRI) at the agency's Kilifi-based KEMRI/Wellcome Trust Research Programme. The study plans to evaluate whether the vaccine is safe, effective and elicits a good immune response in adults in Kenya aged 18 years and above. This vaccine requires storage at normal refrigeration temperatures of 2-8 degrees

Currently, 42 vaccine candidates are in clinical trials and 151 in pre-clinical evaluation. According to Dr. Antony Fauci, the top US expert on infectious diseases, it is good for the world to have several choices when it comes to COVID-19 vaccines. In short, our interest is to ensure that our age group is prioritized once the vaccine is available locally in the months ahead.

4. Building Bridges Initiative (BBI)

The debate on BBI has slowed down after the launch of the signature collection drive was put off indefinitely this past week. According to the BBI national steering team, the launch was postponed to allow for the publication of the requisite Constitution Amendment Bill 2020. However, the answer lies in the politics of BBI.

Regardless, the delayed commencement of signature collection is an opportune window to consider those opposing views. The two principals of BBI have expressed a strong desire for a non-contested referendum, which means they want consensus. This can only be achieved by listening to those with different views. In short and under the circumstances, the principals should let reason prevail.

5. Members' corner

❖ Promotion

I will be featuring any interesting activities which members would like to share with other members. For example, my predecessor, Ms. Jessica Kazina, wants to share with members about a superfood known as Spirulina, which is an organism growing in both fresh and salty water. It is currently grown in Rwanda, and it is considered to have very high nutritional value. It is beneficial to those who are aging and those who are recovering from sickness and need to boost their immunity.

This is an interesting foodstuff and it's worthy trying! For more information contact Ms. Jessica Kazina at: 0722 522 251.

❖ Thanksgiving

For our American members and those of us with family members in the USA, I wish you a "Happy Thanksgiving", which unfortunately will be celebrated differently this year because of the

coronavirus. In the spirit of Thanksgiving, which means to be grateful and appreciative, we should continue to give thanks to God for continuing to protect us from COVID-19. In the words of the French philosopher Voltaire, "Appreciation is a wonderful thing. It makes what is excellent in others belong to us as well". Therefore, let us appreciate the commitment and the excellent work of our essential health workers, farmers, teachers, friends and family members who are providing services during these trying times. Let us remain thankful and realize how blessed we are!

❖ **AFICS-Kenya ID**

We prepared AFICS-Kenya ID cards for our members to facilitate entrance into the UNON compound. This is also useful for those members who do not have a UN ID. The AFICS-Kenya IDs are arranged in alphabetical order. For details please contact our office assistant, Antony Odallo, or Phyllis Gicharu (AFICS-K Secretary)

❖ **Contributions**

A polite reminder: please ensure that your membership contributions are current. Kindly note that for those who retired at the professional level, your contribution is only Kshs.6000 per year, and for those who retired at the general service level, it is Ksh.2500 per year. Your continued support of our association is highly appreciated.

The details for payment are as follows:

MPESA pay bill No.522522

Ksh A/C No.1113818182 and Us Dollar A/C 1113818727

After your payment, please confirm your payment to the AFICS Office

❖ **Get-together**

We have missed our occasional get-togethers during this unusual year, but as one unknown writer once said "we isolate now so that when we gather again no one is missing." I agree with this sentiment very strongly!

As always, I want to end with a word of encouragement from Winston Churchill, "If you're going through hell, keep going." For us that means keep up your spirits, keep well, wear a mask, and stay safe!

With best personal regards,

Amb. John O. Kakonge,

President, AFICS-Kenya

25 November, 2020