



# QUARTERLY News

The magazine of the Association of Former WHO Staff Members (AFSM)

*Supporting former staff and helping them to stay in touch and informed*



The 5<sup>th</sup> Health for All Film Festival will be in full swing by the time you receive this magazine. You can see more photos on the next page, and an invitation to AFSM members to participate in the Health for All Film Festival on page 16

## THE HEALTH FOR ALL FILM FESTIVAL (HAFF)

### The 5<sup>th</sup> Health for All Film Festival, 2024

The aim of the Health for All Film Festival (HAFF) is to stimulate the production of short films on health worldwide, and to recognize the storytelling power of the most creative and effective ones.

Starting immediately after World Health Day, from 8 April until the end of May 2024, during the World Health Assembly, the public is encouraged to watch online the short-listed films from this 5<sup>th</sup> edition.

*An invitation to AFSM members and former WHO staff to be involved can be found on page 16.*



**Awards Ceremony of the 4<sup>th</sup> edition.** Held in 2023 at WHO in Geneva.

The HAFF trophies, jurors and one of the winners who travelled from Sweden for the occasion.



Calm down! Calm down! Sham, calm down!

**A still from a previous winner.**

Among various special thematic film prizes since 2020, "Knock on my door" won the Mental Health category.

It is a story about the trauma of war for Syrian refugees.

Made by The Speciality Hospital in Jordan and produced by Fawzi Al Hammouri, Abdullah Haymour and Rania Al Shadeed.

## CONTENTS

5 <sup>th</sup> Health for all Film Festival	2
News from AFSM	4
Pension Fund update	4
SHI Update	8
UN Inter-Agency Games 2024	9
Our Health	10
News from WHO	12
5 <sup>th</sup> Health for all Film Festival	16
Readers' Recipes	17
New AFSM members	17
AFSM Cruise 2024	18
News from around the world	19
Book Reviews	25
In Memoriam	26
Readers' Letters	37
Art Exhibition in Martigny, Switzerland	38

## EDITORIAL

We are pleased and honoured to be invited to collaborate with the WHO department responsible for the Health for All Film Festival. Gilles Reboux – team leader of the festival – contacted us to seek AFSM help in commenting on the films short-listed for the festival. See page 16 for details, your comments will be analyzed, along with all the other comments, with a view to improving future health films. One of our Executive Committee members, Laura Ciaffei, is actively engaged before the festival, along with other judges, to review the submitted films and draw up the short-list. We still need to persuade more of our readers to switch from the printed edition to reading the digital edition. To encourage more of you to opt for digital, from this edition onwards we will post the digital edition on the WHO website, <https://www.who.int/about/former-staff>, at the same time as the printing files for the paper edition are sent to the printshop. Not only will you be able to read the *Quarterly News* several weeks before the printed edition arrives, but you will also have access to pages that are not in the paper version! Let us know if you wish to switch to digital at [aoms@who.int](mailto:aoms@who.int).

*Keith Wynn*

## EDITORIAL BOARD

Keith Wynn, *Editor-in-Chief and layout*,  
Sue Block Tyrrell, David Cohen,  
Lindsay Martinez, Jean-Paul Menu,  
Dev Ray, Rosemary Villars.

The translation of all articles is undertaken by the Editorial Board and Catherine d'Arcangues, Michèle Evans, Edmond Mobio and Anne Yamada.

The opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Editorial Board.

Please send your contributions for publication in QNT to: Keith Wynn  
[wynn@bluewin.ch](mailto:wynn@bluewin.ch)

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We very gratefully acknowledge the invaluable support of the Printing, Distribution, and Mailing Services.

## IMPORTANT CONTACTS

**AFSM:** Office L 71, WHO, CH-1211 Geneva, Switzerland. Tel.: +41 (0) 22 791 3192 or e-mail: [aoms@who.int](mailto:aoms@who.int) or [afsm\\_aoms@who.int](mailto:afsm_aoms@who.int). The AFSM office is covered on Wednesdays from 13.30 to 16:00. Alternatively, please leave a message and someone will call you back. Website: <https://www.who.int/about/former-staff>. **Resources for retirement:** visit the site, <https://www.who.int/about/former-staff/resources>, and on this same page click on the 8<sup>th</sup> item for **Formalities concerning the death of a WHO retiree**.

**Health Insurance (SHI):** Tel.: +41 (0) 22 791 18 18; in case of absence please leave a message, someone will call you back, or send an e-mail to: [shihq@who.int](mailto:shihq@who.int). The HQ SHI Helpdesk in office L 3 is open, by appointment only, on Tuesdays, 10.00–12.00 and 14.00–16.00.

**Pensions (UNJSPF):** Contact by e-mail no longer possible, to send an **electronic message** use the contact form on the Fund's website, <https://www.unjspf.org/contact-us/>. **Visitors: Geneva:** Palais des Nations, Client Support Centre, Building H, 1<sup>st</sup> floor, on Tuesday and Thursday mornings, from 10:00 to 13:00. **New York:** 4<sup>th</sup> floor, 1 Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza (DHP), Corner of 48<sup>th</sup> Street and 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue, New York, Tuesday and Thursday afternoons, from 12:00 to 16:00. **Documents for NY by post, address to:** United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund, c/o United Nations, P.O. Box 5036, New York, NY 10163-5036, USA. **Documents for NY by courier (DHL, etc.) or registered mail, address to:** United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund, 37<sup>th</sup> floor, 1 DHP, 885 Second Avenue, New York, NY 10017, USA. **Documents for Geneva, address to:** UNJSPF, c/o Palais des Nations, CH-1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland. **Telephone: Geneva:** +41 (0) 22 928 88 00 or **New York:** +1 212 963 6931. **See also the list of Toll-Free and local numbers** at <https://www.unjspf.org/contact-us/>. In the case of **non-receipt of the monthly benefit** or **the death of a beneficiary**, visit the website: <https://www.unjspf.org/emergency/> for instructions. *Remember to always have your Unique ID number handy when contacting UNJSPF.*

## AFSM

### News from your Association

Since the preparation of the previous issue, our Committee has been devastated by the deaths of three of its members.

At the end of November, Yves Beigbeder, a founding member of the Association – and prolific author of works on WHO and the United Nations – passed away, just as we were preparing to celebrate his centenary.

In January, following a very short illness, we lost Maria Dweggah, well known for her lifelong commitment to the defence of staff, and then later of retirees, a former President of the WHO Staff Association and General Secretary of FICSA.

Then, later in the same month, we mourned the passing of Alain Vessereau, a founder and the founding President of AFSM.

They were extraordinary personalities, and we pay tribute to them.

Despite these sad setbacks we have continued our activities, meeting regularly – even in the event of a substantial snowfall – thanks to the internet.

The new arrangement for our walk-in “*permanence*” helpdesk is operational, every Wednesday from 1:30 p.m. to 4 p.m. in office L71 and we continue to respond to your messages received by e-mail ([aoms@who.int](mailto:aoms@who.int)) or occasionally by telephone. It is not uncommon for us to be asked for the contact details of a retired former colleague. Unless both members have agreed to have their address published in the Directory, we first obtain the permission of the person being sought.

We participated in the pre-retirement seminar organized by WHO. It was held only virtually, which we regret because it prevents individual face-to-face contacts.

2024 is a year in which we will hold elections for the renewal of our Committee. It is now even more important to have new candidates to continue our activities and provide you with assistance. ***Please consider standing for election.***

***The AFSM Executive Committee and the Editorial Board of the Quarterly News***

## PENSION FUND UPDATE

### Highlights from the 2023 Pension Board

The 75<sup>th</sup> UNJSPF Board was held from 24 to 28 July 2023 in hybrid fashion. Physically attending were 33 Board members, while others logged on. It addressed the usual wide range of topics pertaining to the oversight and optimal administrative, financial and investment management of the Fund. Below are highlights of some of the essential items discussed by the Board.

#### Administration and Operations

The Pension Fund client base continues to grow with the participate population increasing 4.6% over the last year and the number of beneficiaries, 2%. Contributions, comprising 7.9% of

participant’s pensionable remuneration and 15.8% of the relevant member organization, increased by 5.1% and benefit payments also increased by 5.1%. This means that contributions virtually covered pension payments in 2022  
(See box on the next page.)

## Key Facts

**25 Member organizations**

**143,612 Participants**

**83,988 Beneficiaries**

- **57,121 retirees**
- **13,879 surviving spouses**
- **10,041 children**
- **2,825 disability**
- **31 secondary dependents**

**Contributions: US\$ 3.12 billion**

**Pension payments: US\$ 3.13 billion**

- **paid in 17 currencies**
- **in 190 countries**

*(as of 31 December 2022)*

However, it is anticipated that future growth of participants will be zero or close to zero, whereas the beneficiary population will continue to grow.

The Pension Administration continues to prioritize improving client services and modernizing ageing information technology systems. One technological improvement is the availability of electronic forms, both for the separation process and the beneficiary community. This facilitates the Fund's process of converting the status of participants to retirees with more than 90% of separation cases now processed within 15 business days. More than 25,500 digital certificates of entitlement (DCE) were issued in 2023, representing 36% of eligible beneficiaries and a 66% increase over last year. The Fund emphasizes the practicality of the DCE for the beneficiary and that it reduces fraud risks as well as unnecessary benefit payment suspension. Another important task is data clean-up to fix erroneous, missing, and incomplete data to ensure that information is accurate for the actuarial valuation and benefits processing.

Other news from the Administration is that recent retirees increasingly opt to receive a dollar-track pension, furthering the downward trend for those on the two-track from 23.9% of all beneficiaries in 2018 to 20.1% in 2022. During the same period, the percentage of payments made on the two-track decreased from 12% of all pension payments in

2018 to 3.5% by end 2022. The local currency track was suspended in Albania, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Samoa and Slovakia owing to aberrant two-track payment results. Tonga was also added to the suspension list due to unavailable consumer price index data. Cost-of-living (COLA) adjustments were applied to pensions of recipients living in 125 countries. The COLA adjustment of 8.6% for the dollar track in April 2022 was the highest since 1980.

Following the Board meeting, the Fifth Committee approved the Fund's 2024 budget estimate of US\$ 139,231,100 and the amount of US\$ 8,423,100 chargeable to the United Nations directly for Fund services provided to the United Nations Staff Pension Committee.

## Investments

### Key Facts

**US\$ 77.92 billion: Net assets available for benefits**

**US\$ 13.46 billion: Investment loss**

**US\$ 3.13 billion: Pension contributions and other non-investment income**

**US\$ 3.21 billion: Pension payments and operating expenses**

*(as of 31 December 2022)*

The Office of Investment Management (OIM) invests the Fund's assets with the ultimate goal of the Fund meeting benefit payment obligations years into the future. Investments are carried out under the guidance of the Investment Management Committee within the framework of the Fund's investment policy statement, comprehensively updated following the completion of the quadrennial asset-liability management study.

In 2022, the global economy faced a series of uncertainties impacting financial markets in general and the Fund's investments in particular. Consequently, the Fund's portfolio value dropped 13.82% in comparison with its value end 2021. The drop readjusted the 15-year annualized real rate of

return to 2.18% and the three-year to 2.83%, both less than the desired return of 3.5%.

The Chief Investment Officer informed that during the 2008 global financial crisis, global equities declined by 41.8%, while bonds returned a positive 4.8%, as historically, bonds tend to be a safe haven during financial crises. In 2022, however, both equities and bonds declined simultaneously, due to macroeconomic and geopolitical events, resulting in one of the most significant downturns in history. The Fund's portfolio now appears well on the way to recovery. By the beginning of February 2024, its value had increased to US\$ 88.31 billion, representing a 13% gain over the 2022 value. And it will continue to gain in value until the next economic downturn and then rise again, for that is the inherent nature of financial markets: skittish and turbulent.

The Representative of the Secretary-General (RSG) emphasized the importance of keeping an eye on the future to be ready for unknown challenges. One looming on the horizon is the potential effect of the *net zero policy* (i.e. reducing greenhouse gas emissions to as close to zero as possible) on investment markets.

With a focus on sustainability, the Fund had joined the *Net Zero Asset Owner Alliance* and has since become a leading institutional investor in sustainable investing. The Office of Investment Management enhances environmental, social and governance integration in its investment processes, with a particular focus on climate change, divesting investment in fossil fuels and contributing to the protection and restoration of biodiversity.

At the end of 2022, the Fund held investments in more than 90 countries with the largest concentration in the United States of America (70.92%), followed by Japan (3.82%), China (3.12%) and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (3.11%). The geographical distribution of the portfolio was North America (72.76%), Europe (11.47%) and Asia and the Pacific emerging markets (6.93%).

As the investment portfolio continues to grow in value and diversity, additional resources are needed to manage it as well as to mitigate the risks

associated with the portfolio, including information technology updates to ward off cybersecurity attacks. This is reflected in the Department's budget requests for new posts and appropriate equipment.

### **Asset and Liability Management**

Ensuring the long-term sustainability of the Fund is of primary importance for all stakeholders. Like most defined benefit pension plans, the Fund's solvency is closely monitored through two key studies: an actuarial valuation conducted every two years and an asset-liability management (ALM) study, usually carried out every four years. The latest asset and liability management study, the fifth of its kind, was carried out in 2023.

An important part of the investment decision-making process, the development of actuarial assumptions and the overall management of the Pension Fund, this study was undertaken by a consultant over a six-month period under the joint management of the Pension Administration and the investment office, and in collaboration with the Investments Committee, the Actuary Committee, the consulting actuary and the Solvency and Assets and Liabilities Monitoring (SALM) Committee. The goals of the study were: to assess the impact of key investment strategies; to understand the impact of solvency-related decisions on the long-term sustainability and performance of the Fund; and, to recommend long-term strategic asset allocations that would optimize the Fund's asset return in the context of its liability, risk appetite, risk budget and varying macroeconomic factors. Using the Fund's data and actuarial assumptions from the last valuation (of 2021), a stochastic model was used to apply probabilities to different variables and run projections numerous times to provide a distribution of potential future outcomes. This technique is particularly useful when analysing future asset behaviour. Liabilities were modelled as well, i.e. benefit payments for current and future retirees. The two-track system, one of the more complex elements of the Fund's plan design, was also modelled as part of the liabilities. Projected

over a 30-year period, the study showed a real rate of return below 3.5% for all asset allocations in light of the economic outlook.

The results of this study were considered in detail by the Committee of Actuaries, the Investments Committee, the RSG, the OIM and the SALM Committee, all of whom incorporated the findings in their respective deliberations.

### **Actuarial matters**

Every two years, an actuarial valuation is conducted using different sets of actuarial assumptions to assess whether future assets will be sufficient to cover future liabilities, the latter being mainly monthly beneficiary payments. The last actuarial valuation of 31 December 2021 reported a surplus. It established that the current contribution rate was sufficient for the Fund to remain sustainable over the long-term. This also meant that the Fund was in a strong position to absorb the market downturn in 2022.

The next valuation exercise was slated for December 2023, the results of which will be made known at the 2024 Pension Board meeting in July. For this valuation, the consulting actuary, in collaboration with the Actuary Committee, was to consider the methodology and demographic and economic assumptions to use for the valuation. The latter includes such items as participants' life expectancy, retiree mortality, age at which staff retire, and staff turnover, percentage of benefits commuted, percentage of married participants, the

disability trend, possible cost-of-living increases for pensions, inflation rates, and expected rate of return, to be considered from three different methodological perspectives. The values for the assumptions can and do change from exercise to exercise, in light of the evolution of economic and demographic factors.

According to the RSG, although the real rate of return for the next 10 years was expected to be 3.5%, the Committee of Actuaries would consider the ALM study results, along with other data, to determine which real rate of return and inflation rate to use in the 2023 actuarial valuation. In the end, in agreement with the Investments Committee and the SALM Committee, and taking into consideration the expected asset return based on the revised capital market assumptions, strategic asset allocation and the Fund's historical longer-term investment performance, the Committee of Actuaries recommended that a 3.4% real rate of return assumption should be used for this next valuation. The reduction from 3.5% to 3.4% will be re-determined during the actuarial valuation at 31 December 2023, and like all the assumptions, will be re-evaluated for the next valuation in two years' time.

In closing, it is interesting to note that the Office of Investment Management focuses on a 10-year investment horizon, the ALM study and investment policy statement reviews are conducted every four years, and the actuarial valuation is projected to 30 years.

---

As attested by these various studies and technical committees, much concerted and collaborative effort goes into managing the Fund, both administratively as well as on the investment side. It is truly well-managed and well-positioned to ride out the occasional financial crisis with the long-term objective of providing us retirees a monthly pension for years to come.

***Barbara Fontaine***

**SHI: STAFF HEALTH INSURANCE MATTERS**

## Summary report of main topics discussed at the 27<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Staff Health Insurance Global Oversight Committee

The Global Oversight Committee (Committee) of the Staff Health Insurance (SHI) met on 13 and 14 November 2023. This was its 27<sup>th</sup> meeting since inception. The meeting was chaired by the Alternate Chairperson (Comptroller). Both members elected by former staff (Alejandro Henning and Ann Van Hulle) attended.

This was the second regular meeting of the Committee in 2023 and dealt with miscellaneous items, as opposed to the first meeting of the year which is mainly devoted to SHI financial matters and annual report.

The Committee was presented with a status report on IT projects and activities. Work was progressing on the selection of a vendor for the development of a new computer system for SHI. This work was somewhat delayed due to parallel work required of the IT team in relation to WHO's Business Management System project. Meanwhile, various minor enhancements had been made to the current SHI system to ensure its continued performance to meet requirements. The Committee emphasized the urgency of implementing the new SHI system to enhance performance and meet expectations in today's electronic systems' environment. The Committee received assurance that a limited number of its members would be included in the review of vendors and in the development/launching of the new system.

The SHI Medical Adviser presented his annual report and updated the Committee on prevention, case management and cost containment. The Medical Adviser drew attention to the number of cases involving use of off-label medicines. He recommended that a Working Group of the Global Standing Committee be established to review the question of expensive therapies and advanced

medicinal products as well as incentives for generic medicine treatment.

The Committee received an update on the work of the Compliance Team. This included a report on suspected fraud cases which are referred to the Internal Oversight Services (IOS) audit team. During the discussion, the question of delays in the processing of direct payments to healthcare providers was also discussed. The delays were mainly due to a vacant post in the team which once filled should resolve this problem.

The Committee then received a presentation from the newly appointed Director of Internal Oversight Services. The team's capacity had been increased to meet demands. The Committee was briefed on the number of fraud cases reviewed for SHI and the disciplinary measures which that entailed. WHO has a zero-tolerance policy in the case of fraud.

The Secretariat provided information on the process for election by former staff of members and alternate members on SHI global committees which was carried out during the second half of 2023. This entailed a significant workload for the Secretariat including call for candidates, compilation of candidacies involving translation into English, French and Spanish and processing of the votes. The process was facilitated this time by an enhanced electronic system for the processing of votes.

The Secretariat reported on the results of the 2022 SHI survey. There was a 42.5% response rate from participants worldwide with an overall satisfaction rate of 82%.

The Secretariat also reported on the health insurance survey carried out by the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) in 2022 and 2023. The JIU is the



independent external oversight body of the UN system mandated to conduct evaluations and investigations system-wide. The objective of the survey was to focus on quality, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of health insurance schemes in the UN system organizations. The final report will be made available to the Committee members. Some retired staff members were included in those interviewed for this review.

The Chairperson of the SHI Global Standing Committee (GSC), which reviews individual cases, presented his report on the work of that Committee. He noted that the SHI Secretariat had begun a benchmarking study of our SHI rules which is being carried out in liaison with other health insurances. He said that the GSC welcomed this and looked forward to reviewing the findings before they are presented to the Committee with a view to improving some benefits should funding allow. We emphasized that some rule changes and

review of hospital accommodation rates used to establish ceilings should not be postponed because of the benchmarking exercise.

The Committee received an interesting presentation by the Head of the WHO Behavioral Insights Unit (newly created in 2022). SHI was included in the projects undertaken. One such study was aimed at making the claims submission process more efficient and easier for participants. Another forthcoming project will review the barriers to accessing healthcare in certain regions.

The Committee reviewed the proposed budget for 2024/2025 and had detailed discussions on some of the proposed cost increases. The Committee agreed on the revised budget to be presented to the Director-General for approval.

The next meeting of the Committee was scheduled for June 2024.

**Alejandro Henning and Ann Van Hulle**

## UNIAG – UNITED NATIONS INTER-AGENCY GAMES – 2024

### WHO is hosting the 49<sup>th</sup> United Nations Inter-Agency Games, 2024

As mentioned in the January edition of the *Quarterly News* – (QNT 134) – an exciting event took place during the closing ceremony of the 48<sup>th</sup> Games, when the WHO delegation received the UN Inter-Agency Games (UNIAG) flag for the organization of the Games in 2024.

The HQ Staff Association Committee together with WHO Management are responsible for the preparation of the 49<sup>th</sup> UNIAG. For these games, the organizing committee is committed to advancing **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion** (DEI).

The theme of this 49<sup>th</sup> edition is **“Together our impact is greater: improving global health at all ages through games and sports.”**

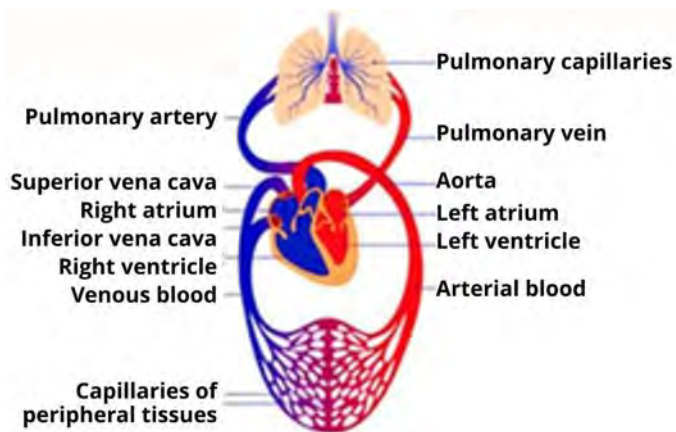
As we go to press, we do not have dates or venues. This information will be communicated to you by e-mail as soon as we receive it. In the meantime, we suggest you check the UNIAG website for updates, <https://www.interagencygames.org>

## OUR HEALTH

### Varicose veins, phlebitis

**A small reminder of how blood circulates:** The function of the main circulation system is to carry oxygenated blood from the heart, via the **arteries**, to all the organs of the body, and then return this blood – now depleted of oxygen and loaded with waste carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) – back to the heart via the **veins**

Pulmonary circulation, or minor circulation, takes the blood from the veins to the lungs, where the CO<sub>2</sub> is exhaled, and the blood is re-oxygenated. These two systems together form the general circulation.



#### The venous network of the lower limbs

- Two venous networks run through the lower limbs: the **superficial network** and the **deep system**.
- The deep venous system is the most important – **it drains 90% of venous blood**.
- The two networks are connected by perforator veins.
- **Deep veins** are located closest to the muscles which, through their contractions, help them pump blood to the heart.
- **Valves in the veins** of both venous systems prevent blood from flowing downwards, back



Varicose veins

into the lower legs, when standing. These valves are arranged along the entire course of the veins.

- In the event of alteration of the valves,

blood reflux and tortuous dilation of the veins occur (**varicose veins**) on the superficial venous network: part of the blood stagnates, causing a feeling of heavy legs, tingling, a brownish discolouration of the skin, etc.

- If there are numerous varicose veins, chronic venous insufficiency may occur, the most severe complication of which is a **skin ulcer** in the ankles.
- **Intradermal varicosities:** fine dilations of the superficial veins, these intradermal varicosities are not serious.

**Risk factors** are age, excess weight, sedentary lifestyle, prolonged standing or sitting, pregnancy, childbirth, heredity, oral contraception, menopause, smoking, wearing high heels, hereditary abnormality of coagulation factors which promote the formation of blood clots.

#### Prevention

- Regular physical activity (walking, cycling, swimming, etc.)
- Cold water shower on the legs morning and evening
- Elevating the legs (if possible during the day; and by raising the end of the bed by 10–15 cm at night).

#### Treatments

Many treatment options exist depending on the size of the varicose veins and the severity of the symptoms.

- **Medications:** recommended in courses of 1 to 3 months, they relieve pain and the feeling of heavy legs.

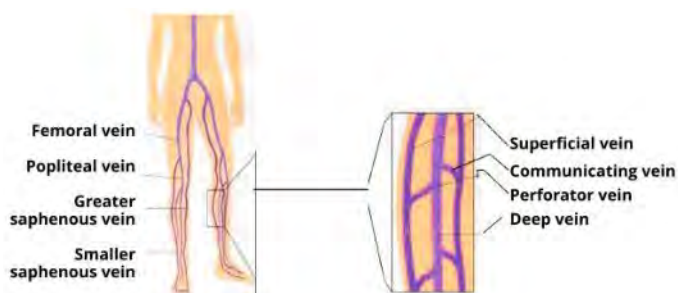
- **Compression stockings:** slow down the development of varicose veins.
- **Liquid sclerotherapy:** Injections of a sclerosant liquid making small varicose veins (intra-dermal spider veins) disappear.
- **Foam sclerotherapy:** injection of a foam to make larger varicose veins disappear (truncular varicose veins).
- **Mini-phlebectomy:** micro-incisions to remove varicose veins.
- **Endovenous laser:** eliminates the vein from the interior, using thermal energy.
- **Surgical stripping:** this procedure consists of removing the diseased vein surgically.

### Superficial phlebitis and deep phlebitis

**Phlebitis** or venous thrombosis is caused by the presence of a blood clot in a vein.

**Superficial phlebitis** (paraphlebitis or periphlebitis) is not serious when an isolated case.

**Deep phlebitis** is when the clot obstructs a larger deep vein, located within the muscle. The clot sticks to the wall of the calf vein and can remain there for several days without symptoms but can break away and cause a pulmonary embolism. The clot may also block the vein completely, causing pain and swelling in the affected leg.



### Factors promoting the occurrence of deep phlebitis of the legs

Some people are more predisposed to phlebitis than others. The phlebitis often occurs when the person is in a high risk situation such as the following,

#### **Prolonged immobilization**

- wearing a cast.
- bed rest following an accident.

- any surgical operation, but especially orthopaedic (fitting a hip or knee prosthesis, leg fracture, etc.): in this case the risk of phlebitis is at a maximum for two weeks following the operation but remains high for 2 to 3 months.
- long journey without moving the legs (by plane, car or train).
- loss of autonomy (concerning the elderly, for example).

Diseases that hinder the return of venous blood to the heart (notably cancers that compress the veins and certain cardiovascular diseases such as heart failure) promote stagnation of blood in the venous network.

Varicose veins which only reach the superficial venous network are not the cause of deep phlebitis, but promote paraphlebitis.

Chronic venous insufficiency promotes the occurrence of **superficial phlebitis or paraphlebitis**.

**In conclusion**, while superficial varicose veins generally only present an unsightly appearance, deep varicose veins can be the cause of phlebitis which can cause pulmonary embolism.

With the appearance of any varicose veins, it is advisable to consult your doctor.

**Dr David Cohen**

#### **Sources:**

National Institute of Health and Medical Research (Inserm). Paris; 2021.

National College of Cardiology Teachers.

National Health Service (NHS). Deep vein thrombosis, website: NHS. London; 2023.

Other sources.

## NEWS FROM WHO

### Highlights of news from WHO

#### Executive Board, 154<sup>th</sup> Session, 22–27 January 2024

The session was held physically in the auditorium of the new B building at HQ under the chairmanship of Dr Hanan Al-Kuwari, Minister of Public Health of Qatar. As usual, the Board had a full agenda containing some 45 items and sub-items. In his opening statement – <https://www.who.int/director-general/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-154th-session-of-the-executive-board-22-january-2024> – Dr Tedros looked back on 2023, WHO's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary year, with mixed emotions. There had been *“many achievements and milestones, including the end of Covid-19 and mpox as global health emergencies, but it had been a year to mourn; a year marred by conflict, disaster and preventable disease and death”*. One of the most important items on the agenda was the draft of the 14<sup>th</sup> General Programme of Work (GPW14) which aims to ensure continuity with GPW13. Dr Tedros highlighted some of the past year's achievements within the framework of the *“Five Ps”* – Promoting, Providing, Protecting, Powering and Performing for health. He referred to a key recommendation of the Member State Working Group on Sustainable Financing – to set up an Investment Round to fund GPW14. The World Health Assembly had endorsed the idea in May 2023 and the DG hoped that it would meet with the Board's approval.

Dr Tedros emphasized one of his main priorities for 2024 – to strengthen WHO's Country Offices in a way that has never been done before. The work of the Action for Results Group established in 2023, made up of WHO Representatives from all six Regions, had been consolidated into a six-point action plan which was being implemented. To establish a core presence in each Country Office, 400 positions had been prioritized for recruitment in Country Offices and USD 200 million had been committed to fund them. Five Regional Directors and the DG had issued a joint global delegation of authority to WHO Representatives to empower them to provide more responsive and timely support to Member States.

In conclusion, Dr Tedros emphasized that 2024 would be *“a defining year for global health and for our WHO, and a year of opportunity”*. Member States have the opportunity to shape three big issues:

- the world's global health strategy for the next four years in the GPW14
- the future of health emergencies, through the pandemic agreement and the amendments to the International Health Regulations (IHR); and
- the future of WHO, through the Investment Round.

During its week's session, the Board elected the three nominated Regional Directors for a period of five years from 1 February 2024:

- Dr Hanan Balkhy from Saudi Arabia as Regional Director EMRO
- Ms Saima Wazed from Bangladesh as Regional Director SEARO; and
- Dr Saia Ma'u Piukala from Tonga as Regional Director WPRO

and expressed appreciation to the outgoing Regional Directors for EMRO and SEARO and to the outgoing Acting Regional Director for WPRO.

The Board reviewed the GPW14 and approved the first WHO Investment Round which will take place later this year. Member States discussed WHO's work on emergencies, including pandemic prevention, preparedness and response, and expressed strong support for the pandemic agreement and

amendments to the IHR, emphasizing the urgency of concluding negotiations in time for the World Health Assembly in May this year. Shortly after the end of the Executive Board meeting, a group of more than 40 global health leaders published an open letter calling on world leaders to show leadership, urgency and commitment to conclude an agreement concerning pandemics that transcends business as usual. One of the main purposes of the agreement is to improve equitable access to vaccines, tests, treatments and other products. Negotiation meetings continue, see, [https://apps.who.int/gb/inb/pdf\\_files/inb7/A\\_INB7\\_3-en.pdf](https://apps.who.int/gb/inb/pdf_files/inb7/A_INB7_3-en.pdf)

The Board also discussed, *inter alia*, WHO's work on noncommunicable diseases, including cardiovascular disease, diabetes and cancer. One of the most important actions countries can take to prevent them is by eliminating what causes them, including tobacco and trans-fat which is used in many food products. To-date, 53 countries had endorsed best-practice policies but implementing them is another matter. Last year, WHO had launched a process to recognize countries which were enforcing the policies and, just after the session of the Board, the first five countries which are leading the world in implementing the policies were awarded certificates – Denmark, Lithuania, Poland, Saudi Arabia and Thailand.

### A selection of other news

- **WHO has been continuing its work with partners to address the most urgent health needs in Gaza**, including through the provision of life-saving medical supplies. WHO also continues to urge all parties to protect health and ensure safe access to health care.
- On 30 November, WHO issued its **annual malaria report** which highlights the growing threat of climate change – **2023 World malaria report**.  
<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240086173>
- **WHO participated in the 28<sup>th</sup> UN annual climate conference (COP28)** in Dubai from 30 November to 12 December, which hosted the first-ever day dedicated to health, at which more than 40 million health professionals from around the globe joined the call to action by WHO and civil society organizations, to prioritize health in climate negotiations at the conference.  
<https://www.who.int/teams/environment-climate-change-and-health/call-for-climate-action>
- On 5 December, **WHO called on countries to increase taxes on alcohol and sugary sweetened beverages**. To help support countries, WHO released a technical manual on alcohol tax policy and administration.



WHO guideline for non-surgical management of chronic primary low back pain in adults in primary and community care settings

- On 7 December, **WHO released its first-ever guidelines on managing chronic low back pain** which is the leading cause of disability globally – **WHO guideline for non-surgical management of chronic primary low back pain in adults in primary and community care settings**.

<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240081789>. In 2020, approximately 1 in 13 people experienced low back pain, a 60% increase from 1990.

- On 11 December, WHO called on governments for **urgent action to invest in Universal Health Coverage**. The 2023 global health expenditure report shed new light on the evolution of global health spending at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic and revealed that in 2021 spending reached a **new high of USD 9.8 trillion** or 10.3% of global gross domestic product. However, the **distribution of spending remained grossly unequal**. In 2021, about 11% of the world's population lived in countries that spent less than USD 50 per person per year, while the average per capita spending was around USD 4000 in high-income countries.

- **The Global Status Report on Road Safety 2023** was launched on 13 December showing that since 2010, the annual number of **road traffic deaths had fallen by 5% to 1.19 million annually**. However, road crashes remain a persistent global health crisis.
  - On 14 December, WHO drew attention to the **need for urgent action to control e-cigarettes** to protect children and non-smokers. E-cigarettes as consumer products are **not shown to be effective for quitting tobacco use** at the population level. Instead, alarming evidence has emerged on **adverse population health effects**: 34 countries ban the sale of e-cigarettes, 88 countries have no minimum age at which they can be bought, and 74 countries have no regulations in place for these harmful products.
  - On 15 December, **WHO announced the inclusion of noma** (*cancrum oris* or gangrenous stomatitis) **in its official list of neglected tropical diseases**.
  - On 16 December, WHO launched its updated **WHO Country Cooperation Strategy Guide 2023**.
  - On 18 December, **Dr Poonam Singh**, then Regional Director, SEARO, was **awarded the National Order of Merit (Gold) by His Majesty The King of Bhutan** for her role in supporting transformative healthcare leadership in Bhutan.
  - On 19 December, a new **South-South health cooperation initiative** was launched **linking Africa and the Caribbean**. It focuses on strengthening the health workforce in the two regions and on sharing innovative solutions in primary health care, with special emphasis on climate resilience and maternal and child health.
  - On 21 December, **WHO prequalified a second malaria vaccine R21/Matrix-M**. The first WHO-recommended malaria vaccines will soon be administered through routine immunization programmes across Africa, beginning with Cameroon.
  - Late December, WHO issued its first-ever **prequalification approval for a polio vaccine**. This next-generation vaccine has been rolled out since March 2021 and the Global Polio Eradication Initiative has **administered nearly 1 billion doses of it across 35 countries**.
- Prequalification will enable additional countries to access the vaccine more easily for a more **sustainable response to outbreaks of type 2 variant poliovirus (cVDPV2)**.
- **The COVAX initiative which delivered nearly 2 billion doses of Covid vaccines to 146 economies and averted an estimated 2.7 million deaths** in the COVAX Advance Market Commitment lower- income participating countries closed on 31 December. Low- and lower middle-income countries will continue to receive Covid-19 vaccines and delivery support from Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, in 2024 and 2025, with 83 million doses requested so far for 2024 from 58 countries.
  - Highlights of **WHO's review of global health achievements and challenges in 2023** can be found through this link - <https://www.who.int/news-room/spotlight/global-health-achievements-2023>
  - 2024 marks the **50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI)**. Over the past five decades, the EPI has evolved and achieved remarkable milestones that have reshaped the global health landscape.
  - On 12 January, **a ceremony was held in Cabo Verde to certify the elimination of malaria** in the country, making it the third African nation to be declared by WHO as malaria-free in the past 50 years.



- On 16 January, WHO issued its **latest tobacco trends report** showing a decline despite the tobacco industry's efforts to jeopardize progress. **150 countries are successfully reducing tobacco use**.
- **Dr Tedros attended the World Economic Forum in Davos in January and spoke at two sessions** on 17 January –

- on **Preparing for Disease X**  
<https://www.weforum.org/events/world-economic-forum-annual-meeting-2024/sessions/preparing-for-a-disease-x/>
  - and **Fighting the Obesity Epidemic**  
<https://www.weforum.org/events/world-economic-forum-annual-meeting-2024/sessions/fighting-the-obesity-epidemic/>
  - On the same day, WHO received a donation of **USD 10 million from The Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum Global Initiatives** to support the health response and provide essential medical supplies in Gaza.  
<https://www.almaktouminitiatives.org/en>
  - On 18 January, WHO released new **guidance on the ethics and governance of large multi-modal models** – a type of fast growing **generative artificial intelligence (AI) technology** with applications across health care.
  - The **WHO Academy** achieved a significant milestone on **31 January when its campus on avenue Tony Garnier, Lyon, was handed over to WHO**. The 9-storey facility is equipped with innovative spaces for in-person and distance learning and will have a state-of-the-art health emergencies simulation centre and custom-built distance and hybrid-learning classrooms. **The building will also host the WHO Lyon Office**.
  - Ahead of **World Cancer Day** on 4 February, WHO's cancer agency, the **International Agency for Research on Cancer, released the latest estimates of the global burden of cancer**. Data available in countries in 2022 highlight this growing burden: about 1 in 5 people develop cancer in their lifetime and approximately 1 in 9 men and 1 in 12 women die as a result of some form of cancer.
  - In February, **two WHO programmes received awards**:
    - **the WHO Hive online platform**  
<https://hivecenter.who.int/> which is a digital space for health emergency preparedness and response powered by communities, was a winner in the website category for communities at the 11<sup>th</sup> Web Excellence Awards in Basel, Switzerland; and
    - **the social media colleagues in the Department of Communications** won 2<sup>nd</sup> prize in the 9<sup>th</sup> Geneva Engage Awards in the international organizations category.
  - On 20 February, the **Global Initiative on Digital Health (GIDH)** was launched virtually.  
<https://www.who.int/initiatives/global-initiative-on-digital-health>. It is a **WHO Managed Network aiming to amplify and align resources toward country-led digital health** transformation through strengthened collaboration and knowledge exchange. It acts as a vehicle to facilitate the implementation of the Global Strategy on Digital Health 2020–2025.
  - **World Hearing Day** was celebrated on 3 March under the theme **“Changing mindsets: Let’s make ear and hearing care a reality for all”**.
  - The fifth **Health for All Film Festival is ongoing** – the official selection of about 90 short films will be presented to the public in April 2024 and winners will be announced by mid-May 2024 – see *the article on pages 2 and 16*.
  - A communications colleague in **EURO, David Barrett**, began a **WHO Desert Island Discs** initiative in Spring 2023. There have been **six episodes to-date with colleagues in EURO, HQ and EMRO**. Here is the link to the latest one with the EURO ombudsperson Francisco Espejo Elguetta who has just gone on retirement back to his native country Chile –  
<https://www.mixcloud.com/WHOEurope/whos-desert-island-discs-francisco-espejo-elguetta/>
  - Members in the Geneva area may have read that the **long-awaited tunnel and new road “route des Nations”** opened on 25 March. This new 1.2 km section, with 80% of it underground, **links the motorway to the international organizations** district and runs right past the WHO HQ campus. It has taken 76 months and about 60 workers to complete the project.
  - The theme of this year's **World Health Day** on 7 April is **“The Right to Health”**. Staff voted on options for the tagline and the winner was **“My Health, My Right”**.
- Further information and documentation can be found on the WHO website – [www.who.int](http://www.who.int).
- Sue Block Tyrrell**

## THE HEALTH FOR ALL FILM FESTIVAL (HAFF)

### The 5<sup>th</sup> Health for All Film Festival (continued from page 2)

### Let's watch the shortlisted films in the 2024 edition!



AFSM members and former WHO staff are invited to participate actively by commenting on the short films on YouTube and by spreading the word on this opportunity in their network. Choosing to watch at least a few of the short films in the 5<sup>th</sup> official selection of about 90 stories is inspiring and entertaining because of the diversity of artistic approaches selected. It will also be useful to WHO, since your thoughts and reactions – shared online – will contribute to the collection of valuable insights by a research project investigating the impact of film for better health.

At HAFF's initiative, a preliminary group of researchers have started meeting to establish a methodology towards trans-disciplinary research, which will mix social science with neuroscience, as well as communication, and film-making analysis. The goal is to produce a guideline for health educators using short films to encourage behavioural changes for improving health.

Since 2020 the Health for All Film Festival competition has received over 5000 submissions from 110 countries. It has selected nearly 400 short films (duration, one to eight minutes) which constitute a comprehensive catalogue of health stories. The impressive diversity of these short films showcases numerous experiences of people facing various health challenges, as well as the tireless efforts of those working to improve health outcomes worldwide.

Each year a prestigious jury of senior experts from WHO, along with critically acclaimed artists such as Sharon Stone, Alfonso Herrera or Emilia Clarke, the Film Festival has become an excellent way to illustrate WHO's major public health goals.

A wealth of feedback received from around the world highlights the crucial role of this Festival for raising awareness, fostering empathy, and encouraging actions in the field, as well as inspiring WHO's staff, teams, and offices, and also its partners and donors.

Every year, alongside the three regular main categories, there are also two special themes: For 2024, these special theme prizes will be for films illustrating "**Migrants' and Refugees' Health**" and "**Physical Activity and Health**".

Don't hesitate to spread the word on all these aspects of the Festival to your family and networks! Films are a powerful way to raise awareness, improve understanding and encourage positive behaviour changes. By engaging with the films and sharing your views, you can contribute to this movement for health promotion. Remember, every voice matters!

#### Your ways to participate:

- **Find films to comment on**, at <https://www.who.int/initiatives/health-for-all-film-festival> – click on "**official selection**" and visit the pages where the WHO YouTube playlists are available. You'll also find information about the jury, the events, and the goal of health impact through film.
- **Join the movement for health impact through film** at [www.linkedin.com/groups/9011296/](http://www.linkedin.com/groups/9011296/) and promote the festival on social media using the hashtag #Film4Health.

**Gilles Reboux** (WHO staff member, Film Festival Leader, Digital Communication Unit/Department of Communication)



## READERS' RECIPES

### Asparagus gazpacho (serves 4)



#### Ingredients

4 slices of cured, dried ham  
 12 green asparagus stems  
 2 large jars (640 g) of white asparagus  
 2 tablespoons of olive oil

#### Recipe

Bake the ham slices and the peeled and tailed green asparagus for 10 minutes at 180°C. Reserve four asparagus stems, one for each bowl, for decoration. Cut the ham into strips and the remainder of the asparagus into pieces.

Heat the white asparagus along with its water and mix it in a blender.

When cooled, pour the blended white asparagus into soup bowls, and add the chopped green asparagus, the strips of ham, and a drizzle of olive oil. Decorate each bowl with one green stem. Serve with breadsticks and rosé wine.

*Michèle Evans*

## NEW MEMBERS

### We have pleasure in welcoming the following members into the AFSM family

#### New Life Members

Caroline Cross  
 Carol Drayton Thompson  
 Xavier Duparc  
 Evelyn Finger  
 Marie Gaspard  
 Elsa Vitry

#### Conversion to Life members

Boniface Biboussi  
 Nadia Popovic

#### New Annual Members

Mohammed Alali  
 Caroline Allsopp Leitner  
 Sean Patrick Hayes  
 Patricia Rosenfield

## AFSM CRUISE 2024

### Captivating landscapes and historic cities of Andalusia and the Algarve

26 September to 3 October 2024  
(8 days and 7 nights)

On the *MS La Belle de Cadix*,  
5 anchors (5 stars), 88 cabins



#### An “all-inclusive cruise” comprising:

- Flights to and from Geneva and Seville
- Air-conditioned cabins with shower, WC, hair-dryer, safe, telephone, television, WIFI
- Full board and all drinks at table and in the bar
- 10 excursions
- Evening Entertainment

#### Price per person

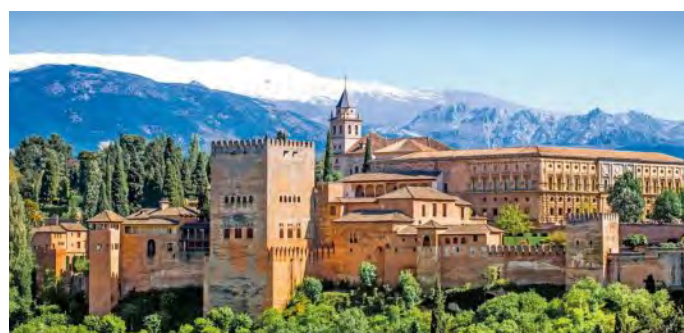
Middle deck	Double cabin	2,908 Euro
Middle deck	Individual cabin	3,593 Euro
Superior deck	Double cabin	2,974 Euro
Superior deck	Individual cabin	3,627 Euro

**Time is now short, and there are only a few cabins remaining, so please don't delay, book now. To tempt you further, there is a detailed itinerary on pages 43 to 45 in the electronic edition.**

#### Programme

This cruise offers a unique itinerary on two rivers with contrasting landscapes between two countries, Spain and Portugal.

Navigation on the Guadalquivir and in the Gulf of Cadiz to Huelva.



Navigation on the Guadiana in the heart of a nature reserve.

It includes three jewels of the Andalusian golden triangle – **Seville, Cordoba and Granada** – also the caravel park of Christopher Columbus in Huelva and, in addition, Alcoutim which is an authentic small Portuguese village.

Day 1	Geneva to Seville
Day 2	Seville – Cordoba
Day 3	Seville – Isla Minima – El Puerto de Santa Maria
Day 4	El Puerto de Santa Maria – Jerez – Cadiz
Day 5	Alcoutim
Day 6	Huelva – Seville
Day 7	Seville – Granada
Day 8	Seville to Geneva

#### For inscriptions

**email:** [c.hager@bluewin.ch](mailto:c.hager@bluewin.ch)

**or by post:** Charles Hager, Route de Chêne 64 c, 1208 Geneva, Switzerland.

## NEWS FROM FORMER WHO STAFF MEMBERS' GROUPS AROUND THE WORLD

### News from around the world

**AFSM-HQ:** During the past three months, and, as evidenced by the following contributions, our colleagues in the regional associations' committees have undertaken important initiatives to ensure the best possible service to their members.

In AFSM-AMRO/PAHO, Gloria Coe (Glo) finished her term of presidency to devote herself to other tasks and her family. We are sorry she will no longer be president because we greatly benefited from her leadership and human warmth. Here's to the next occasion we are in touch Glo! Our friend Hernán Rosenberg succeeds her. We have already had the opportunity to appreciate his qualities and his rigour when he was vice-president. We wish him an excellent presidency.

In AMRO/PAHO, as in other associations, we welcome the fact that priority is given to communications with members and between members. This is a huge challenge faced by all associations. Thanks to modern technology, there are many ways to communicate effectively but this requires a heavy investment of time for the volunteer members of the associations' committees. Commitment from WHO administrations, at Headquarters and in the Regions, is essential.

You will also see that activities in Copenhagen are progressing well and that the team in charge of creating this brand-new association has excellent plans.

It is undeniable that the six-monthly meetings of the Global Council of AFSMs provide a powerful impetus to the development of regional associations thanks to the exchange of ideas and mutual inspiration that the Council facilitates.

Three new Regional Directors have just taken up their duties, at EMRO, SEARO, and WPRO. We are sure that our colleagues will be able to convince them of the interest of our associations. Our best wishes go out to them.

*Sue Block Tyrrell, Jean-Paul Menu and Dev Ray*

### Regional reports

**AFSM-SEAR** extends the greetings of the New Year to colleagues across the Regions.

The Association in New Delhi has been continuing to reach out to former staff members and provide its services towards their welfare and interests.

The focus of the past months has been to provide instruction to ensure that the annual CE process is, as much as possible, completed in the Digital CE App. The experience of the DCE process this year has been good, thanks to the updated App and the swift compliance.

With the change in the WHO/SEARO regional leadership and the assumption of office by the newly-elected Regional Director, the AFSM looks forward with enthusiasm to enhanced support and patronage of the Regional Office towards the Association's functioning and its activities, especially in the area of office support.

We also look forward to initiating a healthy dialogue and process of MOU and/or Agreement with WHO towards the institutionalization of our AFSM, in the spirit of the DG's motto of "*Once WHO, always WHO*".

The contributions and deliberations of the Global Council of AFSMs are an essential and critical part of this process.

***M.R. Kanaga Rajan*** (President, AFSM-SEAR)

**AFSM-PAHO/AMRO: Greetings from our AFSM.** First, we anticipate that the new AFSM President — Hernán Rosenberg— will continue our excellent relations with AMRO/PAHO under the new Regional Director, Dr Jarbas Barbosa. We will continue our endeavors to improve the healthy living of our members.

Second, as there are many priorities, in this report let's focus on the major effort, which is to reach and service potential members in the countries of the Region as well as the Regional HQ. To this effect:

- Meetings with PWR's will be continued and/or repeated.
- We are encouraging members in countries to organize local chapters. In one country we already have a fully functioning chapter, in a dozen others we have active focal points.
- We have formally introduced the focal points to the PWR to facilitate their activities.
- Our by-laws have been amended to allow Board Members to participate remotely, and be elected regardless of country of residence.
- Board meetings are on zoom, and open to all members when non-confidential matters are being discussed.
- We have several social media outlets for exchanges among members, including Facebook and Instagram.
- Our website with valuable information is accessible on-line.
- The AFSM Newsletter with many social, medical, and professional articles is distributed on-line.
- We use blast messages to our members for time-sensitive matters.
- We hold an annual meeting – Covid permitting – and in alternate years we change the venue to a different and attractive site, inviting all members to attend.
- We are working towards a better integration of our systems, including having a password-protected web site to allow members access to confidential information such as directories.
- We took great care when we were digitalizing our communications. We gave almost a year's forewarning about the Newsletter changing to on-line only. Only four members requested a printed version. However, aware that some of our older members might be very sensitive about using computers, we also created the possibility of designating a person, at the member's discretion, to receive our correspondence on behalf of the member.

We believe we are constantly managing to reach more people but appreciate that there is a lot more to do. We will cover other activities in further reports.

***Hernán Rosenberg*** (President AFSM/AMRO/PAHO)

**AFSM-EMR: The Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office organized an event on 28 January 2024 to mark the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of WHO.** The theme chosen “*Painting a Healthier and Safer Future Together*”.

The aim: to bring together the public and private-sector stakeholders in the spirit of the shared commitment to foster partnership and investment towards the goal of “Health for All”, especially in the context of health emergencies across the Region.

The event was introduced by a retired former staff member, underlining the efforts of all generations in building together the success of the Region and WHO.

A video was shown emphasizing the hard work and commitment by WHO and the Region over the years. This heightened the emotions and brought back so many memories, making us all feel proud to be a part of WHO.

During the event all of the Regional Directors who had led the Regional Office from its inception in 1949 were honoured: Sir Aly Tewfik Shousha, Dr Abdul Hussein Taba, Dr F. Partow (Officer in Charge), Dr Hussein A. Gezairy, Dr Ala Alwan, Dr Mahmoud Fikri, Dr Jaouad Mahjour (Acting RD), Dr Ahmed Al-Mandhari.

A Special Recognition Presentation was made to Egypt, the host country of EMRO, the WHO Regional Office since 1949. The Special Adviser for Health to the President of Egypt received a commemorative plate honouring this Special Recognition.



#### **During the Special Recognition Presentation.**

In the foreground Dr A. Tag El Din, the Special Health Adviser to the President of Egypt receives the commemorative plate from Dr Ahmed Al-Mandhari and Dr Amr Kandil, on behalf of the Minister of Health.

In the background, the video is showing the Prime Minister of Egypt, Dr M. Madbouli, Dr Kh. Anan, Minister of Health, and Dr Tedros, during the announcement that Egypt is free of Hepatitis Virus type C.



#### **Some of the WHO participants at the event.**

A joyful mix of serving and former staff happily celebrating the WHO 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary event organized by the Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office.



#### **The incoming Regional Director and the outgoing Regional Director.**

Dr Hanan Balkhy and Dr Ahmed Al-Mandhari, together displaying the commemorative Special Recognition plate.

Photos: © WHO EMRO

The newly elected Regional Director, Dr Hanan Balkhy addressed the event and welcomed all those present.

The event concluded by an amazing performance given by the renowned Egyptian musician Mr Omar Khairat.

**Hanaa Ghoneim**, President AFSM-EMR

**AFSM-WPR: Taking a big leap at the start of the leap year....** Buoyed with the official recognition by WHO that was celebrated in a well-attended, hybrid General Assembly cum Annual Reunion last 16 November, AFSM-WPR wasted no time in putting in place mechanisms that would facilitate implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). But first, a sneak peek at the grand and historic 2023 General Assembly, made possible with the generous support of WHO/WPR. Held at the WHO Conference Hall, a 1950's architectural icon, the event had 84 attendees (20 online), that included WPRO officials led by A/RD Dr Zsuzsanna Jakab, the Chairperson of the WHO/WPR Staff Association, officials of AFSM/HQ, AFSM/PAHO and AFSM/SEARO, and of the Association of Former International Civil Servants (AFICS/Phil).

Dr Tedros, in his video-taped message, warmly congratulated AFSM-WPR for being the first Regional Association to be recognized by the Organization and reiterated the oft-repeated quote, *"once WHO, always WHO"*. Calling retirees *"senior interns"*, DG acknowledged that the *"knowledge, experience and wisdom of retirees remain vital assets for the present and future successes of the Organization"*. DDG and A/RD Dr Jakab gave an inspiring address, recalling milestones for AFSMs from the DG's address at the AFSM/HQ General Assembly in 2017 asking the Association to propose arrangements whereby *"we can work together, help each other and remain one family"*, to efforts in WPRO that she led and supported in 2023 culminating in the signing of the MOU between WHO/WPR and AFSM/WPR on 9 October 2023.

***Fast forward to 2024, an action-packed first quarter, giving teeth to the MOU....***

- Post-General Assembly follow-up activities
  - MOU shared with AFSM Global Council and Jen Linkins, AFSM-HQ Focal Point
  - Report of 2023 General Assembly shared with WPRO officials, digital report to be shared with participants and the Global Council. Thanks to WHO/WPR for the support.
  - True to her commitment made during the Assembly for *"continuity with change as the way forward"*, DDG and A/RD, Dr Jakab, communicated to RDs on 31 January and shared the WPRO experience as a possible example for recognition of AFSMs.
- **First Meeting of AFSM-EXECOM 2024-2026** on 11 January – Dr Jakab hosted lunch, met newly elected Officers, and reiterated commitment to put the MOU in action.



More photos can be seen on page 48, in the digital edition only.

- **IC/12/23 dated 22 Nov 2023 announced designation of Director, Administration and Finance and Regional Human Resources Manager as WPRO Focal Points for AFSM.**
- Meetings with DAF Team (Adm. Services Unit, IT, RHRM), WPR/SA Chairperson, to firm up agreed support to AFSM. Currently, all out support being provided to AFSM on request.

- AFSM President was invited to the official welcome ceremony for WPRO RD **Dr Saia Ma'u Piukala on 1<sup>st</sup> February.**
- **DAF Memo & email to WRs/CLOs** on designation of Focal Points in Country Offices for Collaboration with AFSM was sent on **30 Jan 2024. TORs were likewise provided.**
- **Courtesy call on RD, Dr Saia Ma'u Piukala with DDG Dr Jakab** on 6 February. Dr Saia appreciated retirees' valuable contribution and was supportive of the AFSM. Dr Jakab endorsed the AFSM to the RD and suggested to continue supporting its work. AFSM hosted lunch to welcome the RD and to thank Dr Jakab and the DAF Team for unwavering support.

**Linda Milan** President AFSM-WPR

**WHO Retirees' Representatives in Scandinavia:** Our goal of establishing an AFSM for the European Region (AFSM-EUR) continues to be work in progress. Our present focus is on drafting statutes, rules of procedure and a three-year work plan and budget for our Association. We also plan to draft an MOU similar to AFSM-WPR describing future collaboration between AFSM-EUR and the Regional Office for Europe to be presented to the Regional Director and the Executive Director for their consideration and input. While the formalization process gains momentum, we continue to pursue areas of collaboration with the WHO/Europe Staff Association.

We are organizing a briefing on the taxation of UN pensions in Denmark that is scheduled to take place in May. We are also planning to increase the number of social outings for EURO retirees this year.

Through our participation in meetings of the Global Council of AFSMs, we have a greater understanding of and appreciation for issues that impact former staff at both global and regional levels. The European Region is fortunate to have a well-functioning public health infrastructure, yet in many countries the specific needs of an ageing population are overlooked. We look to Headquarters and the Regional Office for guidance on how we can support the United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing. We appreciate the Director-General's continued commitment to the institutionalization of AFSMs at the global level and the positive effects it will have in supporting our retirees and former staff.

A lunch for former EURO staff was organized in Copenhagen on 13 January 2024.



**Back row (left to right):** Melodie Karlson, Robert Tjoa, Enrico Paez, Manfred Huber, Lisa Copple.

**Middle row:** Brenda Nielsen, Gill Nissen, Gitte Andersen Havn, Jerry Poulle, Alice Gran Olsen, Sharon Miller.

**Front row:** Elena Nivaro, Olga Safranova, Elena Egorenkova, Jenny Madsen, Wendy Enersen, Pamela Charlton, Patricia Søndergaard, Tanja Michaelsen, Marina Hansen, Christine Rosenberg, Franka Edwards.

**Melodie Karlson and Sharon Miller**

**AFSM-Africa: AFRO Retired but Not Tired:** During the last quarter of 2023, AFSM-AFRICA continued its activities by stimulating creation and encouraging local associations in each country. It is for this reason that we present in this bulletin the celebration of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Association of Former United Nations Civil Servants in Burkina Faso.

Furthermore, since January we have launched a campaign to pre-finance the publication of our collective book *“And if the story of health in Africa were told to me...”* which we hope to publish next May, on the sidelines of the World Health Assembly.

- The Association of Former United Nations Civil Servants in Burkina Faso (AFUNCS-BF) was created in January 2003. It is a member of the Federation of Associations of Former International Civil Servants (FAFICS). It brings together 200 members, former civil servants of all categories, and has the following goals: solidarity, the exchange of information and news on all questions of common interest, the representation of its members before the administrations and organizations of the System of United Nations in matters of pension and post-retirement insurance, and contribution to reflection on subjects of general interest.
- 2023 saw the celebration of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Association. An informative press conference, a special issue of the Association's Information Note was published, and a financial contribution was made to the government for the peace effort in Burkina Faso, and to support internally displaced students. It was also an opportunity to pay special tribute to certain members who devoted a lot of their time to the life of the Association and even helped several African countries to create and set up their own associations.



Dr Abdoulie Doudou Jack, a public health physician from Gambia, died on 2 January 2024 after a short illness. He trained for undergraduate medicine in Tanzania and public health postgraduate training in the UK. He served his national government in various capacities, from District Medical Officer to leading the establishment of an Epidemiology and Disease Control Unit within the Ministry of Health.

Dr Abdoulie Jack first joined WHO as team leader and Principal Researcher for the Gambia Hepatitis Intervention Project. It was the first time that a national immunization campaign was launched to prevent cancer. Eight years later, Dr Jack was reassigned to the WHO Office in Botswana, and then to Nigeria to lead the relaunch of the polio eradication initiative. This period was marked by the growth of the polio team, growing from 10 members to more than 300, including more than 100 international professionals.

After serving as head of the Inter-Country Polio Team in Harare, Dr Jack then served as WHO Representative in Rwanda and Kenya before retiring.

After retirement, Dr Jack continued to serve WHO. He was deployed to Sierra Leone and Uganda as acting WHO Representative. He was also a member of the WHO Regional Certification Committee for Polio in Africa until his death.

Dr Jack was an icon of Gambia and a public health specialist, a hero of immunization who served across the continent with dedication and commitment. We pray the Almighty will be pleased with him and grant him mercy. He leaves behind his wife, four children, and grandchildren.

**Kalula Kalambay** (President AFSM-AFRICA)

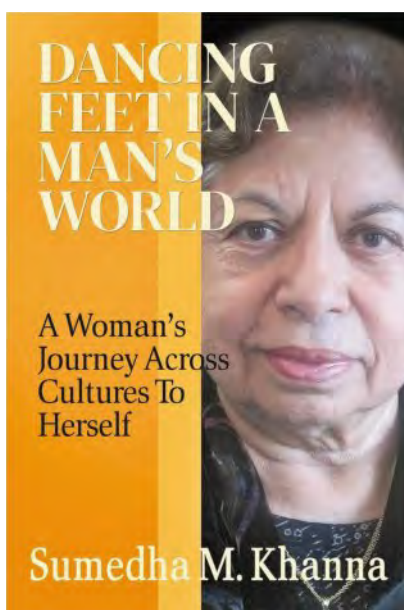
**Solange Kouo Epa** (Secretary AFSM-AFRICA)



## BOOK REVIEWS

## DANCING FEET IN A MAN'S WORLD: A Woman's Journey Across Cultures To Herself

Sumedha M. Khanna



Published: 28 October 2023

Language: English

Paperback: 148 pages

ISBN-13: 979-8-9890089-0-2

Published by: Sumedha M. Khanna

Available from Amazon:

[https://www.amazon.com/s?k=Dancing+feet+in+a+man%27s+world&crd=3D8T7YG98M4JB&sprefix=dancing+feet+in+a+man%27s+world%2Caps%2C160&ref=nb\\_sb\\_noss\\_2](https://www.amazon.com/s?k=Dancing+feet+in+a+man%27s+world&crd=3D8T7YG98M4JB&sprefix=dancing+feet+in+a+man%27s+world%2Caps%2C160&ref=nb_sb_noss_2)

Paperback: GBP 21.00, 25.00 Euros, USD 26.00

e-book: Kindle Unlimited, free.

Kindle to purchase, USD 8.00.

Dr Sumedha Mona Khanna is a former World Health Organization staff member. She is an obstetrics/gynaecology and public health physician and worked for WHO for over 25 years, specializing in women's health, national family planning policies, and safe motherhood strategies in more than 60 countries.

This is a personal story of Sumedha Mona Khanna's extraordinary life journey, presented in images, stories, and anecdotes. She wrote this book

especially to share with the younger generation of girls in her extended family: her nieces, and most of all, her grandnieces. *"I want them to know about me after I am gone and to be inspired that a woman can do whatever she wants in life. It requires courage, determination, and stamina."*

Mona made history in both PAHO and WHO. In 1970, PAHO's Director, Dr Abraham Horwitz of Chile, nominated her to be WR to the Government of Guyana, which had accepted her nomination. Dr Candau – the then Director-General of WHO – was opposed to naming a woman WR and denied the use of WHO-AMRO funds to PAHO's RD for this position. By using only PAHO funds Dr Horwitz named her the first woman WR. Later, PAHO's Regional Director, Dr Hector Acuña of Mexico named her Director of a Division in PAHO HQ, again the first woman so named.

In the mid-1980s, Dr Halfdan Mahler of Denmark, WHO's Director-General named her WHO's Director for the Health for All by the Year 2000 Strategy in Geneva. Subsequently, Dr Mahler suggested she should consider running to become DG upon his retirement in 1988. However, one of her biggest challenges was that her career had been in the Americas, primarily in the English-speaking Caribbean, and the Government of India neither knew her, nor her career details, and she needed India to support her candidacy.

She later became WR in Indonesia, after which she took early retirement from WHO in 1993 and continued to share her enormous experience with non-profit and health-related agencies. In 2015 she established a Foundation to support girls and women from low-income families in India. Mona also became a member of AFSM-PAHO/AMRO.

**Gloria Coe** (President of AFSM-PAHO/AMRO, book reviewed on 20 December 2023)

## IN MEMORIAM

### Recent deaths<sup>1</sup> of former WHO staff members as reported to AFSM

Agbotse	Koami Mawuto	Not known	Iacob	George	27.10.2023
Aitchedji	Cyrille	01.11.2023	Jones	Peter S	11.11.2023
Aitio	Antero T	Not known	Kayed	Zeid Hilmi	18.11.2023
Ayeni	Olusola I	17.06.2023	Kruse	Judith	11.09.2023
Ba	Oumar	11.09.2023	Kuzoe	Felix	17.09.2023
Barns	Thomas E C	28.09.2023	Lloyd	Valerie Susan	13.11.2023
Becker	Henry Richard	01.07.2023	Londono Escobar	Raul Jesus	17.11.2023
Beigbeder	Yves B	29.11.2023	Maphosa	Stephen	08.08.2023
Caceres	Bertha	05.12.2023	Medina	Marcelo M	10.10.2022
Cedillos	Garcia Rafael A	02.09.2023	Mehra	Leila	12.09.2023
De Koning	Hendrik W	27.10.2023	Mgeni	Amani Yakobo	14.02.2021
De Regil Castilla	Beatriz	02.11.2023	Ndalla	Jean-Claude	22.07.2023
Diaw	Sire	22.09.2023	Nikiema	Seni Pierre	01.08.2023
El Shami	Clare	12.10.2023	Nsue-Milang	Diosdado-Vicente	16.04.2023
Erakhifu	Akhamie Audu	14.09.2022	Prost	Andre M E	03.02.2023
Erben	L Rosmarie	16.11.2023	Rocabado Quevedo	Luis Fernando	28.10.2023
Eriksson	Lillemor M	19.11.2023	Rodriguez Guzman	Julietta	04.07.2023
Fathalla	Mahmoud F	09.11.2023	Ruiz	Luis	09.12.2023
Fernandes	Joaquim M	11.12.2023	Samayoa Castillo	Carlos	12.12.2023
Fernandez	Amadeo	30.11.2023	Servais	Grace L	03.05.2023
Fernandez Cartagena	P	03.12.2023	Stovring	Bent	04.10.2023
Gilsfeldt	Torben	28.07.2023	Tandjung	Johanna	16.10.2023
Hamid	Kazi Abdul	24.12.2023	Thoby	Knud C	Not known
Hoskins	Irene Else	15.10.2023	Van Pernis	Gertrude	27.09.2023
Howard	Paul L F	13.07.2023	Weiland	Judy	29.10.2023
			Zeribi	Taoufik B A	11.12.2023

The deaths were also announced of the survivors of former staff members: Aslanian, Ludmila; Assaad, Fauzia; Blana, Viola; Bossio De Hilburg, Isabel; Capitaine, Genevieve; Carbo, Adelada Carmen; Conrado Singui, Itala; Deckers-Gatti, Martine; Dumbleton, Jane Keeley; Han, Chi-Fui Pauline; Kilker, Ingeborg; Lauridsen, Bente Iris; Lee, Sung; Ngoulou, Denise; Perera, Lalitha M; Rojas De Sojo, Nydia; Samarakodyge, Seelawathie; Sehossolo, Suzanne; Shrestha, Ganesh Maya; Speck Bienert, Helga; Tonn, Carmen Noemi; Vidal, Josefina; Vogt, Eliane Mireille

<sup>1</sup> The present notification of deaths was gratefully received from UNJSPF and covers Q4 2023. We have endeavoured to ensure that deaths already published have not been repeated in this list, however we apologize in advance if there are omissions or repeat entries. The editorial policy is to publish, once only, the names on the list of death notices we receive, and this regardless of whether an obituary has already been published; appears in the current issue; or will appear in a future issue.

## **Daniel Flahault born 6 February 1929, in Cholet, France, died 13 January 2024 in Geneva, Switzerland**



Daniel Flahault died in Geneva just as he was about to turn 95. French doctor, born in Cholet, and a specialist in public health, he graduated from Harvard. He joined WHO in 1960, at the age of 31, where he remained until his retirement.

He departed immediately to take up a post in sub-Saharan Africa with his wife Françoise, pediatrician (died in 2018), and his four children, Sabine, Cyril (died in 2004), Isabelle and Antoine. For eight years, he was successively project manager in the Democratic Republic of Congo (formerly Zaire) and Niger, then WHO representative for Togo and Benin (formerly Dahomey).

In 1969 he returned to WHO headquarters in Geneva where he was responsible for the training of health personnel and contributed to the preparation of the Alma-Ata Conference on primary health care. Daniel Flahault's vision of global health was avant-garde in this immediate post-colonial era because it sought to promote the skills and resources of Africans.

Dr Flahault worked tirelessly within the multilateral Organization so that Africans themselves would take control of their own health, while Western powers often attempted to cling to their grip, their power, and their influence on the destiny of the African continent.

He retired to Geneva, his adopted city. He had 23 grandchildren and 14 great-grandchildren.

***Dr Antoine Flahault***

## **Yves Beigbeder, born 16 July 1924, in Morlaix, France, died 29 November 2023, in Sauveterre-de-Béarn, France**



Our dear colleague Yves Beigbeder died at the age of 99 years and 4 months in his family home in Béarn.

Yves led a long and rich life, or as he liked to put it, "*a multiple life*".

After a period in the French Resistance against the Nazis, and a law degree, in 1946 he was chosen to be the assistant to his uncle Henri Donnedieu de Vabres, the French judge at the Nuremberg Trials. This direct contact with Nazis guilty of crimes against humanity, and with international justice, was to have a profound

impact on him and he made it the subject of numerous writings, interviews and conferences until the end of his life. He then went to the USA and obtained a Master's degree in pedagogy and psychology. In 1951, he began a career in the personnel departments of two United Nations agencies: First in Rome with the FAO (1951 to 1955) then Chief of Personnel at the WHO regional office in Brazzaville (1955 to 1958), and in the Copenhagen office (1958 to 1961). In Denmark he met and married Audrey. In 1961 he was transferred to WHO headquarters where he finished his career as deputy chief of personnel. While in Geneva he was assigned for short periods to SEARO, EMRO and Ouagadougou (OCP). He "*retired*" to Thonon in 1984, but his 39 years of retirement were to be his most prolific years.

His work in Geneva had become (in his words) “*quite monotonous!*”, he continued to study law at the University of Grenoble. In 1973, he completed a doctoral thesis on trade unionism at the United Nations and in particular on staff representation at WHO. There followed a long period (1975–2018) of publications (at least 23 books and 32 articles in French and especially in English) in the fields of international administration, the history of WHO, the rights of patients, the reform of the United Nations, the crises at WHO, the international criminal courts, the role of NGOs in the humanitarian field, the international monitoring of elections, the UNHCR, UNICEF and the ILO among others... He presented his work at international conferences in Europe and the USA. He taught at Webster University in Geneva. He also provided legal advice for the defense of international civil servants in dispute with their organization. Many of his publications have been the subject of reviews in the *Quarterly News*.

Sadly, Yves’ wife died in 2005 and his own health problems having severely limited his mobility in recent years, he left Thonon to settle in Béarn with his family. His intellectual activity and his interest in

See also, Readers’ Letters on page 37

international politics, however, did not wane. Until the very end of his life, he sent a weekly column to his many friends analyzing current events. He received many visits from journalists and, in time for his 98<sup>th</sup> birthday, he published his latest book, written jointly with Pascale Casbi, his autobiography in French: *Le temps de la Paix – Souvenirs d'un siècle de justice internationale* which was the subject of a review in the *Quarterly News* of April 2023 (No. 131).

A founding member of the AFSM in 1989, he was continually re-elected to the Executive Committee which awarded him the title of honorary member. He contributed to the development of our Association through his wisdom and his qualities as a lawyer.

Yves leaves us with the memory of a true gentleman, “*a man of the world*” in the truest sense, always listening to others but with strong convictions.

We extend our condolences to his children, Muriel, Thomas, Steve and Martin, as well as to their families.

**Jean-Paul Menu**

## **Maria Dweggah (née Maestri) born 10 March 1948 in Bezzecca, Italy, died 15 January 2024 in Geneva, Switzerland**



interest. While on the student council, she

Maria lived in the mountainous region near Lake Garda until age 12, then moved to Solvay, New York to live with relatives. In 1967, she graduated the *Most Unforgettable Student* of her class from Solvay High School. Her extra-curriculum activities foretold her evolving areas of professional

advocated on behalf of fellow students and her involvement in the American Field Service Committee nourished the international educator. She earned a Bachelor of Arts degree at State University of New York before joining the Peace Corps in 1972 and training as a health educator, first in Sokode, Togo where she met her husband, Dote Dweggah, then in Cameroon.

Returning to the US, she moved to San Francisco for a while, then to Paris where her son was born, then back to San Francisco where she worked as a manager of a low-income senior residence in the squalid Tenderloin district (where many feared and fear to go) and later at Wells Fargo Bank while

pursuing paralegal studies and teaching English to immigrants and refugees.

In 1992 Maria joined WHO Headquarters. In April 1995, she joined the Staff Association where she remained active as President, Vice-President or regular member until retirement, working tirelessly to defend staff rights and to improve work conditions. She initiated the Solidarity Fair to raise funds for staff losing their jobs and in need of financial assistance. Simultaneously, she took courses in international administrative law to strengthen her staff advocacy skills, and taught English on a voluntary basis at the University of Applied Sciences Institute in Geneva. From 2003 to 2005, Maria was the General Secretary of the Federation of International Civil Servants' Association, then acting General Secretary end 2006 for three months. Her last position until retirement in April 2010 was Secretary to the Headquarters Board of Appeal Secretariat.

In retirement, Maria took on a new career as an international educator. After completing graduate courses in organizational development and obtaining the Cambridge CELTA certificate, she taught English as a foreign language and organizational development/human resources to

university students in Afghanistan (during wartimes), Niger, Ivory Coast and Algeria. In addition, she worked on legal cases on employment rights of UN system-wide staff, collaborating with a local attorney and the staff associations of the UN and its agencies. She was also an active member of the Association of Former WHO Staff Members (AFSM) for many years.

While working and in retirement, she found time to sit on editorial boards of staff magazines, first the *UN Special*, then the *AFSM Quarterly News*, often contributing articles on staff issues, human rights, or her work experiences.

A true humanitarian, a fighter for employment justice and a fearless adventurer venturing where many dare not go, Maria will be remembered for her professionalism, her generosity, her sparkling personality, her intelligence, and her courage to fight for what is just, bringing hope to many. She will be greatly missed by her son Raffaele, daughter-in-law Zahia, extended family, close friends, and the hundreds of people around the world whose lives she touched with goodness. She is unforgettable.

**Barbara Fontaine**

---

A collection of tributes to Maria can be found on pages 41 and 42, in the electronic edition only.

---

## **Alain Vessereau, born 14 March 1929, in Paris, France, died 24 January 2024, in Geneva, Switzerland**



Alain was Founder and former President of our Association of Former Staff Members at HQ – a task he undertook just after his retirement. He remained very active on the Committee for several years following his term as President. We are extremely grateful to him for

setting the foundations of our Association which has grown steadily ever since.

Alain's long career with WHO started when he joined EURO as a medical doctor working in health statistics. He then moved to AFRO in a similar position before moving to HQ where he worked as a medical statistician and epidemiologist, becoming Chief of the Unit dealing with Global Epidemiology Surveillance and Health Situation and Trend Assessment. He retired from WHO after almost 28 years of loyal service.

Apart from his official duties, Alain showed a keen interest in the WHO Staff Health Insurance (SHI). He worked tirelessly to ensure that its Fund remained viable in the long term and his efforts paid off. During his time as President of the SHI Surveillance Committee, Alain was instrumental in improving the decision-making structure by convening the first joint meeting of surveillance committees and staff committees from HQ and the six regions. This resulted in arriving at consensus on major decisions affecting the future of the Fund and in correcting the actuarial imbalance over time. Alain was forward looking and proved by his

The family of Alain Vessereau, his wife during 63 years, his five children and 11 grandchildren, express their gratitude to AFSM for honouring his memory by the obituary note in the QNT. Alain's involvement in the life of the Association demonstrates for us his sense of caring for others, his constant concern for our well-being but also his conscientiousness and perseverance.

Despite the pain of his loss, we are pleased to note that his work is recognized and has produced lasting effects which endure over time. Likewise, in his personal life towards his close relatives, he was calm but demanding, always striving to improve the present and prepare for the future.

As you will have read, Alain was a founding father of our AFSM, and we owe him a debt of gratitude. We hope you will enjoy reading his article on the following page, on the birth of our Association, published in the pilot issue of the *Quarterly News* in 1989.

Space in this printed magazine does not permit the inclusion of the second article by Alain on the birth of our Association and this article, written on the occasion of our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, was published in the *Quarterly News (QNT 100)* in 2015 and can be found on pages 46 and 47 in the electronic version of this edition, which is posted on the AFSM website – [www.who.int/about/former-staff](http://www.who.int/about/former-staff).

actions that he cared about future generations. We can be forever grateful for the time and effort he invested on a completely voluntary basis.

Alain continued to show interest in receiving the minutes of our AFSM Executive Committee meetings up to the end of his life. We (Sue Block Tyrrell and Ann Van Hulle) were fortunate to have been able to visit him last year in the beautiful setting of the retirement home in Vandoeuvres, Geneva, where he and his wife resided. You can read and see a photo of that visit in *QNT 132* of July 2023.

### ***Ann Van Hulle***

Having lived in the Latin quarter of Paris up to the age of 30, Alain was happy to embrace a career which offered him the possibility of travelling round the world. Consequently, his five children were born in four different countries. Up to the end, he retained his broad-mindedness, his subtle sense of humour verging on irony, his sense of curiosity and his cultivated mind.

We will also cherish the memory of his righteousness, simplicity, great kindness, and generosity.

### ***Family of Alain Vessereau***

# NEWS

## OF THE ASSOCIATION OF FORMER STAFF MEMBERS

PILOT  
ISSUE

### INTRODUCING THE ASSOCIATION

The Association of Former WHO Staff Members originated in the realization that the links between a staff member and WHO are deep and durable -- going far beyond a simple work contract.

Yet when the time came to leave, it was difficult to maintain even the frailest bond among colleagues. The years of work together is like a life lived with a "family". Though that life had to be left behind, we told ourselves that one would keep in touch with colleagues, and that all would be fine.

That life, pleasant as it has been, did not facilitate our coming to grips with the world around us, where one has to take it upon oneself to solve problems that in the past had been dealt with by others.

That is why so many former staff expressed the wish to find, somewhere, a structure to which they could turn, where they might find the information or advice to help them with decisions and the solution of problems.

Our Association is concerned with all former WHO staff, whatever their place of residence. The responses received from them illustrate the interest in such an Association. Colleagues have expressed the hope that it would help them break out of the isolation into which they were slipping, to reduce the delays with which they were informed of decisions that might have a bearing on their living conditions, or simply, to know how WHO and their former colleagues were getting on.

To meet these expectations, we intend to maintain close links with staff associations, with retirees' representative bodies, as well as with the WHO Administration. Only thus can our Association play a useful and effective role and have a bearing on interests, especially pensions and health insurance, of former staff.

We will also be at the disposal of members to try and help them solve any problems to which they see fit to draw attention.

### HERE'S THE NEWS

This bilingual publication, tentatively called the News, aims at providing news and views of general interest to readers.

This means information, both good and bad, not only about health insurance, pensions, and taxes, which are important, but also items about the international civil service.

For, even though readers have left WHO because of the rules, it is our belief that their interests remain as wide-ranging as ever.

Our aim is more than to just fill pages with words, but to provide reporting that is straight-forward and understandable that readers want to read.

Although English and French texts may differ, the context is the same. Drop us a note of comment or even of criticism. For only with you there is dialogue and the News.

=====

We hope this ambitious programme will not prove too heavy. Ours is, as yet, only an Interim Group whose task, for a few months, will be to place the Association on firm foundations and, once that has been done, to organize elections as provided for by the Statutes, which will elect a group of representatives chosen by you all.

In order to succeed, we need your help, your suggestions, your proposals, your constructive comments. We also need your practical help, even if only sporadically (it will be more sporadic if there are plenty of volunteers).

To conclude, I should like to turn to those who have written to us, and to whom we may not yet have answered: we will be writing to you.

-- Alain Vessereau

## Mahmoud Fathalla, born 1 May 1935, in Abu Hammad in Egypt, died 9 November 2023 in Assiut, Egypt



Mahmoud Fathalla received his MD degree from the University of Cairo in 1962 and his PhD from the University of Edinburgh. In 1972, he was appointed Professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at the University of Assiut. From 1978 to 1986 he was Dean of the Assiut Medical School and on retirement

was appointed Professor Emeritus.

His association with WHO began in the early 1970's when, as an expert working with the newly created Expanded Programme of Research, Development and Research Training in Human Reproduction (HRP), he played an active role in both international activities and in HRP's network of Egyptian research centres.

Mahmoud was a leading figure in establishing WHO's Safe Motherhood Initiative in Nairobi in 1987, delivering his timely and, unfortunately continuingly valid, presentation "*Why did Mrs X die?*" highlighting the social and health system barriers that contribute to maternal mortality. Later in 1987, Mahmoud joined WHO, becoming Head of Research of HRP and together with its Director, José Barzelatto, defined the concept of "Reproductive Health" (now "Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights"). This new concept was approved at the Cairo Conference on Population and Development in 1994, becoming the cornerstone of women's health.

On becoming HRP Director in 1989, Mahmoud was instrumental in ensuring that women's perspectives and rights were addressed across HRP's research agenda. He involved the International Women's Health Coalition and with them began assessing HRP's activities, initially through a meeting "*Creating Common Ground*";

subsequently creating a unit on gender and rights in HRP as well as the Gender Advisory Panel which reviewed all projects proposed by the scientific units of HRP.

Mahmoud was a very private person who brought his characteristic calm, quiet-spoken and gentle manner to his work. It was impossible to remain upset or angry about anything when faced with someone of Mahmoud's nature! He was also a master at reaching consensus in meetings. He would sit quietly through the discussions and then summarize the conclusions of the meeting, including quotes from many of the participants. This usually resulted in approval of what Mahmoud wanted out of the meeting!

In 1992, Mahmoud left WHO, to become President-Elect of the International Federation of Gynaecology and Obstetrics and Senior Advisor in Biomedical and Reproductive Health at the Rockefeller Foundation, where he remained until 1999. He eventually returned to his home in Assiut.

Mahmoud dedicated his life to women's health and gender equality and, specifically, to the promotion of safe motherhood. He insisted that making pregnancy and delivery safe for all women was the principal challenge confronting obstetricians worldwide.

While appreciating the inherent difficulties, he continued to advocate for equal rights and opportunities for women all over the world, especially those living in countries where the right to gender equity remains to be realised. A true humanist, Mahmoud defended the traditional values of Islam while at the same time, having the gift of open-mindedness, working for a dialogue without preconditions among different faiths.

He will be greatly missed not only by his wife Wafa and his son, Mohamed, but by all of us who knew him and had the honour of working with him.

***A group of former HRP staff members***



## Gráinne van Pernis (née Barry) born 19 July 1924 in Sligo, Ireland, died 27 September 2023 in Geneva, Switzerland



Gráinne was born in the north-west of Ireland and achieved the grand age of 99. She was the sixth child of a family of seven. After her education she was first employed in the Irish Civil Service, working there for several years. When she was aged 27,

she was offered the opportunity to travel to Geneva to work for WHO.

Gráinne arrived at WHO in 1951 and began her career with the Supply Division (SUP). On the strength of her experience in SUP she was later reassigned to the Programme of Human Reproduction (HRP), where she was kept busy with the multiple and varied supplies for this programme.

She knew Adrian van Pernis as a colleague and they both practiced cross-country skiing. One year after Adrian became a widower, they decided to marry, and the ceremony was held in Lucens in

1992. They both loved music and played the recorder within a small group, which gave them much pleasure.

In 1994, Gráinne acquired a holiday home in Burdignin (France) where the couple spent many summers and other holidays, inviting friends and colleagues to join them. The van Pernis family reunion was held in 2006 in nearby Bogève. This proved to be a family highlight. Sadly, Adrian died shortly after the reunion in August 2006 at the EMS Foyer St-Paul, in Cologny, Geneva.

Gráinne sold the house in Burdignin in 2014 and she also decided that she no longer wanted to live alone in the Rue Viollier apartment in Geneva and chose to move to the EMS Foyer St-Paul.

Ireland was her home for her first 27 years. Geneva was her home for her remaining 72 years. Every year, until travelling became too difficult, she visited her family in Ireland. She was very close to her sisters and brothers and to her nieces and nephews.

**Frank van Pernis**

## Gwendoline (Gwen) Carnelley, born 21 March 1923, in Gateshead on Tyne, United Kingdom, died 9 January 2024 in Blonay-St Léger, Switzerland



Readers may recall articles in *Quarterly News 132* in July 2023 about celebrating Gwen's 100th birthday last March, with visits by two Executive Committee members (Sue Block Tyrrell, whose colleague Pat Brown had been a friend of Gwen's, and Anne Yamada, who had worked with Gwen

in Manila) and the subsequent visit to see Gwen by the Director-General on 7 April 2023 to celebrate WHO's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary on World Health Day.

In addition to enjoying meeting her in April, the Director-General made arrangements to give the floor virtually to Gwen in May at the closing ceremony of the World Health Assembly. "It was my great honour to work at the World Health Organization for over 30 years (beginning in 1949) in Switzerland, Sri Lanka, Iran, Ghana and the

*Philippines” Gwen said. “It was my first job and my most cherished. It made me so proud to work for the health of people all over the world. And I know that WHO is still as important today as it was when I worked there, and maybe even more so. I would like to thank all the Member States and all the health partners, and my dear past and present WHO colleagues for all you do to help make the*

*world healthy and safe. You are my family, and you make me proud to be WHO”.*

A remarkable lady, friendly and very committed to her work at WHO. She took early retirement in 1980. Gwen will be missed by her friends and those who cared for her in her retirement home.

**Sue Block Tyrrell**

---

## **Valerie Susan (Sue) Lloyd, born 31 August 1942 in London, UK, died 13 November 2023 in Geneva, Switzerland**



Sue joined WHO on 28 September 1964, with her first assignment in the WHO Regional Office for Africa, working with the Regional Adviser for Education and Training – Dr Vysohlid. They had similar friendly personalities and rapidly became an efficient team with whom everyone

enjoyed working. Even then, Sue was always singing, notably the children’s song “*Puff the magic dragon*”. Sue loved animals and she had a cat in Brazzaville: on leaving AFRO to work in HQ from February 1966, she had the cat sent to her mother in the UK to continue his life under the caring hands of a Lloyd to guide his paw prints!

In HQ, Sue worked initially in Conference and General Services, then in Veterinary Public Health, followed by 12 years in the office of an Assistant Director-General, and finally in the section on Planning, Cooperation and Coordination, International Cooperation, until her resignation and retirement end June 1999.

On the social side, Sue liked to cook and host dinner parties. On one occasion her pudding had sunk in the middle but, as “*failure*” and “*disaster*” were not in her vocabulary, Sue remarked to her guests that to get a pudding to sink in the middle is terribly difficult!

In addition to her work, Sue was probably best known for her beautiful voice in choirs, and singing, acting and producing shows for the Geneva Amateur Operatic Society (GAOS) for almost 50 years. When the ADG was absent and her office colleague had stepped out, Sue could be heard by her office neighbours singing and dancing in the office! Sue paid great attention to detail in the shows that she directed and was almost always connected with other shows in some helpful way: she had several stints on the GAOS Committee, and she always had a good story to tell, often against herself. There was a certain charm about Sue – you could not help liking her – maybe old “*Puff*” had magic there after all.....

Sue is sorely missed in the GAOS community and by all her friends, including her furry ones which are being well looked after.

**Valerie Buxton and Sue Block Tyrrell**

**Beryl Ruff née Smith, born 12 June 1927 in Redford, UK,  
died 7 December 2023 in Geneva, Switzerland**



Beryl was a gifted child, excelled at school, and was offered a place at university, but to her lasting regret circumstances precluded her from accepting this offer.

Beryl eventually fulfilled her desire to study to become a Librarian and joined the WHO Library on 28 September 1949.

With her enthusiasm and energy, by July 1980 she was made Head of Acquisitions; and soon after, she took over from Seymour Taine the retiring Chief to become Chief of the WHO Library. She was a dynamic, innovative, and inspiring leader, and carried out many programmes to provide vital services to relate to the goals and information needs of staff at WHO Headquarters.

Importantly, Beryl led the library in taking up opportunities offered by new rapidly developing information technologies such as MEDLARS from the US National Library of Medicine, a bibliographic storage and retrieval system. With her initiative,

the WHO Library was first among the international libraries to begin working with an automated, integrated library system.

Of special mention is her important work to strengthen public health and medical information access by WHO regional and country and field libraries and documentation centres, particularly in the African Region. She travelled tirelessly to give training, encouragement, and resources to every WHO office.

She was also an enthusiastic and active supporter of the global library community such as IFLA, the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions.

She married Edmond Ruff, also a WHO staff member, who sadly passed away in 1991. Beryl retired on 30 June 1987, and in retirement travelled extensively from her Geneva home, and was also able to indulge in her love of equitation, being an active member of several riding clubs in Geneva.

***Guillaume Ruff  
Carole Modis***

**Aleya El Bindari-Hammad, born 19 October 1936 in Cairo, Egypt,  
died 15 November 2023 in Geneva, Switzerland**



With a PhD in Public Health Administration from Boston University, Aleya joined WHO in 1970. Assigned to Indonesia, she fearlessly championed marginalized peoples, becoming a voice for the voiceless. She worked tirelessly to give more

responsibility to communities for their own health decisions, and to partner with governments and local institutions on healthcare programmes. Assigned to HQ in 1973, she co-planned and implemented the 1978 Alma-Ata international conference on PHC – a major milestone in the field of public health, identifying PHC as the key to the attainment of Health for All (HFA).

Aleya established, *inter alia*, the Commission on Health and Development; the Commission on Women, Health and Development; and the

programme on Functional Literacy for Women. She organized a pioneering meeting at the Rockefeller Bellagio Conference Center on *“Equity and Health”* that so moved a resident musician, he composed a score on the theme.

With the support of the then DG, Dr Mahler, she and her team designed and organized the 1986 WHA Technical Discussions on *“Intersectoral Actions for Health”* developing a coalition that brought together for the first time, heads of UN agencies and the World Bank.

When she retired from WHO in 1997, having reached ADG level, Aleya became a visiting professor at NYU’s Wagner Graduate School of

Public Service. Together with her beloved husband Ismail, Aleya established the Ismail & Aleya Hammad Fund in 1999, aimed at nurturing future leaders by providing postgraduate scholarships to international students. The Fund was endowed in 2001, with the support of Nelson Mandela.

Aleya’s trailblazing legacy of commitment to better health for all now permeates WHO and development efforts everywhere.

She is survived by her daughter Rasha and son Youssef, and two grandchildren.

***Rasha Hammad and Patricia Rosenfield***

Aleya was a remarkable woman – she could get things moving in WHO and elsewhere with ease and seemed to know all the right people. Consequently, during my collaboration with her, I had the great privilege of seeing how to move mountains and re-channel rivers in international health work. Primary health care owes a lot to her foresight and involvement.

***Dev Ray***

Aleya El Bindari Hammad was a truly extraordinary woman.

I had the privilege of working with her for over ten years and I gained a lifelong mentor and friend. As a young woman starting out at WHO, through our work together, and through the example she set, Aleya taught me all the essential lessons for navigating the WHO workplace and making a difference in global health and development work.

Aleya was a visionary and together we were able to turn many of those visions into concrete policies and programmes that changed lives, particularly the lives of women. Aleya demonstrated the qualities of a true leader. She was uncompromising in her approach, and was a tough negotiator when she needed resources to get the work done. She was as demanding of her staff as she was of herself, but she unfailingly supported her staff.

Aleya’s legacy will continue in the history of primary health care, and in documenting and acting on the links between policies and programmes outside of the health sector and health status outcomes.

***Catherine Mulholland***

As a colleague and friend, I distinctly remember Aleya due to her overwhelmingly pleasant personality, her kindness and gentle demeanour, her sharpness and innovative character. She really thought *“outside the box”*.

Her journey was full of lessons in strong will and great achievements in the health and humanitarian fields that made and are making a difference in people’s lives until this day. She was an inspiration to everyone who met her.

***Wilfried Kreisel***

## READERS' LETTERS

### Dr Yves Beigbeder

Further to the obituary (*see page 27*) I would like to add my own memories of this brilliant man.

Dr Yves Beigbeder, graduate of the Sorbonne, will be best remembered for his clerkship – as a young man armed only with his undergraduate degree – at the most famous trial in history: The Nuremberg Tribunal. (\* *See link to the Yves Beigbeder interviews below*). He was a prolific academic and author, publishing one book per year after his doctorate in public law. He was also a UN International Civil Servant, (FAO and WHO) and Professor at Webster University, Geneva.

Dr Beigbeder was France's leading expert on the UN, his calls for reform through his publications inspired a new generation. On his 98<sup>th</sup> birthday he published "*Le temps de la Paix – Souvenirs d'un siècle de justice internationale*" – his personal memoir and inspirational reflections on what has been learned in international law since his contemporaneous presence at the Nuremberg Tribunal. He contributed to ongoing research on the security risks presented by inadequate UN whistleblower protection mechanisms with me at Webster University, Geneva.

Dr Beigbeder was a humble and compassionate humanitarian and continued representing UN staff before the ILO Tribunal until his mid-nineties in addition to his day job. He understood the architecture and design of the UN tribunal system which was often an uneven playing field for the UN staff member. He navigated the UN system with grace, an erudite mind and stalwart integrity. He was present at the UN's creation and intimately familiar with the UN's potential for humanity, and its shortcomings as a structure at the behest of the powerful governments when national interest prevailed.

Dr Beigbeder, a widower, is survived by four children and was at his happiest in his home town in the sunshine of Sauveterre de Béarn, Basque Country on the French-Spanish border, surrounded by his family who threw a grand birthday party for him every 16 July. He continued to play chess and scrabble at his local cafe and was a legendary, formidable opponent. He died peacefully at his home on the same day as US Diplomat Henry Kissinger, at 99 years of age leaving a legacy in the field of international relations.

His daughter, Muriel, found a little note in Yves desk just after he died, it said: "*Enjoy life ... it is short!*"

**Caroline Hunt-Matthes** (*Adjunct Professor, Grenoble Business School, France, and Webster University, Geneva, Switzerland, and an independent International Human Rights Investigator [PSEA]*)

---

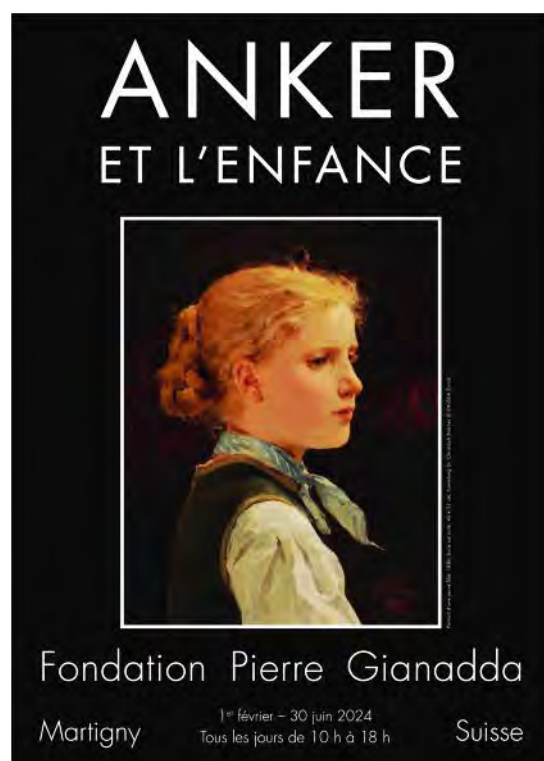
\* Many of Yves interviews, including on his Nuremberg experience, can be viewed at:  
[https://www.youtube.com/results?search\\_query=yves+beigbeder+interview](https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=yves+beigbeder+interview)

## ART EXHIBITION IN MARTIGNY, SWITZERLAND

## ANKER AND CHILDHOOD

**Fondation Pierre Gianadda, Martigny, Switzerland**

1 February to 30 June 2024, every day from 10 am to 6 pm



This exhibition invites the public to rediscover the work of this artist dedicated to childhood. These are individual portraits, of children playing, and studying. Albert Anker (1831–1910) a Swiss painter, reveals himself to be one of the first painters to have become aware of the behaviour of the child at a psychological level and to depict it in his paintings. He certainly applies the theory of the Protestant pastor Johann Caspar Lavater (1741–1801) according to which: “*The face is the scene where the soul is exposed – whoever does not grasp it at that precise moment cannot paint it*”. Anker, in a way, is close to the theories of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1768) or Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746–1827), who consider children as beings “*innocent by nature*”, but then “*corrupted*” by poor education. Childhood fascinates him. Matthias Frehner, curator of the exhibition and specialist in Swiss painting, highlights this universe with paintings coming mainly from Swiss collections. This exhibition reflects a typical Switzerland of the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the representation of family, school, play, and society. He portrays a Switzerland of disciplined children and melancholic old men,

of diligent craftsmen in a calm and peaceful life.

Having decided to be a painter instead of a pastor, Anker favours images over words using the universal message of historical representation. An excellent example is the painting *French Protestants fleeing their country*, 1886, where he depicts the consequences of political events, those of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, promulgated by Louis XIV, which forced protestants to go underground or go into exile. Switzerland proved itself to be a country of transit rather than settlement. Anker’s allegory depicts an exhausted refugee family resting; alluding to the Holy Family with a protective father and the little girl kept warm by her mother.

In Paris Anker leads the life of a normal inhabitant, but in his native village of Ins (Bern), a bourgeois life. Village life inspires him, with its farmers, artisans and merchants. Historically, until the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, within this working community children were expected to actively participate. In his paintings, he depicts them helping their parents on the farm, at home and in the fields. He does not judge this situation. To illustrate this theme: *Two children carrying a tub of water*, 1893. Anker captures them as they balance the bucket on a pole. On the other hand, the artist places *Little Red Riding Hood*, 1883, in the countryside far from the farm environment. With an apron protecting her dress, the red beret reinforces the metaphor of the title, and sets it in a peaceful forest.

In 1874, primary school became compulsory and secular. The number of works illustrating studious children is legion. He also deals with the *The School Walk*, 1872, the importance of life in the open air and, with *The Gymnastics Lesson*, 1879, the benefit of physical exercise: *Mens sana in corpore sano* (A healthy mind in a healthy body). As for play, it socializes and complements education, constituting essential learning. Another theme where the talent of the artist excels as in *The Young Girl Holding Two Cats*, 1888. We see the happy smile displayed by children in the company of animals. And again in *Young girl playing dominoes*, 1900, the painter depicts the concentration of an adult but with the air of youth. This exhibition has the merit of immersing us into a poetic universe, a transposition of an often very harsh reality. Confirming once again the role of art in human life.

### **Laura Ciaffei**

Fondation Pierre Gianadda  
Rue du Forum 59  
1920 Martigny  
Switzerland

Phone: +41 (0) 27 722 39 78  
Website : <http://www.gianadda.ch/>  
E-mail: [info@gianadda.ch](mailto:info@gianadda.ch)  
Tarifs: Seniors (60 +) : CHF 18 € 18



**Albert Anker. *The School Walk*, 1872**

Collection Dr Christoph Blocher

© SIK-ISEA, Zurich



**Albert Anker.** *Two children carrying a tub of water, 1893.*

Kunstmuseum Solothurn, legacy of Urs Brosi, Solothurn, 1917

© Kunstmuseum Solothurn, David Aebi, Bern



**TRIBUTES TO MARIA MAESTRI DWEGGAH****MARIA MAESTRI DWEGGAH, obituary on page 28**

*"Do not think of me as gone. I am with you still in each new dawn."*

I had the tremendous pleasure, honour and privilege of working with Maria for a number of years, and on a day-to-day basis during her last years in WHO as the Executive Secretary to the body responsible for reviewing the administrative decisions of the Organization. Maria you were not only a colleague, but you were also a friend and a sister.

For those of us who worked with her, we remember how extremely professional she was in her approach to work and in her relationship with colleagues. She was truly dedicated to assisting and empowering staff in WHO and the youth in numerous countries, and to build capacity and confidence in relation to their career, improving performance and demanding for justice. Maria was so BRAVE, willing to stand up for the voiceless and the most vulnerable. Her attitude to serve is felt by all who were privileged to know her.

Maria, rest in perfect peace my dear friend and sister. You are gone but will never be forgotten. You were and will always be loved.

My sincere and heartfelt condolences to her son and family. We have an angel in heaven, who touched so many, watching over us.

***Pamela Drameh-Avognon***

Maria a travaillé sans relâche pour les droits d'un grand nombre de collègues. RIP

***Arun Seetulsing***

To Maria, wherever you may be now. I am sure it is in a good place, which gives you relief. I still remember when you left WHO and we had a meeting in the EB. You said that all the materials' values do not matter to you because you cannot take them with you into your grave. And you are so right. I know you worked hard to support your family and were always selfless in your approach to the needs of other human beings. I so much respected your straight line, no matter who it was or what they had done, you went ahead to go out of your way to support them in your professional way and from the heart.

But after retirement you never retired from this work or faltered on your path. You were as active as before doing what you did best and what you wanted to do, support people in work situations, fight for justice while using your endless emotional and intellectual intelligence. I loved the way you just said what you thought. It took me some time to figure out what 'that is a lot of BS' meant though.

You were a truly unique, strong, and warm-hearted woman. I had a lot of respect for you and will always have. We need more people like you in the world to spread the love.

See you again on the other side and until then take care. With lots of love.

***Evelyn Kortum***

Before retiring from WHO in May 2010, Maria worked as the Executive Secretary of the (now abolished) Headquarters Board of Appeal “the HBA” (see photo below, taken a year after her retirement, with Chairs and members of the HBA and the Secretariat’s Team).

Like many others whose lives Maria touched indelibly, we want above all to celebrate Maria’s life. It was an extraordinary life, filled with love, good-will, generosity, passion for justice, care for others and humanism. Her sparkling personality and charisma, her intelligence and her good-hearted and joyful aura never failed to make an impression on those who crossed her path. Maria was so much more than words can sum up but, more than anything, we want to celebrate the dedication and passion Maria showed towards a fairer and more caring UN system internal justice, and the how-so numerous instances where she gave her support to international civil servants in difficulties as they were in distress or about to give up hope of a solution. Maria was a warrior for Justice, she would never let go and confronted crisis and injustice with bravery, often against all odds.

Maria’s life has shined its way throughout, she was a warm beacon of hope for many of those she helped and cared for. We want to believe that, alike stars, her light will keep on shining in our sky well after her departure.

Maria, we bid you “*au revoir*” (not “*adieu*”). We heartfully hope you will keep on the good work wherever you are now and that we will meet again.

**Sandrine Lo-Pat**



## AFSM CRUISE 2024 – DETAILED ITINERARY

### CAPTIVATING LANDSCAPE AND HISTORIC CITIES OF ANDALUSIA AND THE ALGARVE

Cruise from 26 Septemberto 3 October 2024 (8 days and 7 nights)

SHIP:MS LA BELLE DE CADIX, 5 Anchors (5-star), 88 Cabins



Seville – Cordoba - Isala Minima - El Puerto de Santa Maria – Jerez -Cadiz – Alcoutim - Huelva  
– Seville – Granada – Seville

#### The highlights

- An unprecedented itinerary on two rivers with contrasting landscapes, between two countries, Spain and Portugal
- Navigation on the Guadalquivir and in the Gulf of Cadiz to Huelva
- Navigation on the Guadiana in the heart of a nature reserve

#### The all-important

- The three jewels of the Andalusian golden triangle – Seville, Cordoba and Granada
- The caravel park of Christopher Columbus
- Alcoutim, an authentic small Portugus village

#### Day 1 Geneva to Seville

Flight Easyjetdirect : Depart Geneva 11h20 Arrive Seville  
13h40 Embarkation point :Paseo de las Delias  
Presentation of the crew and welcome cocktail. Dinner  
Free evening in Seville

**Day 2 Seville ~ Cordoba**

Full day excursion (2 hours both ways) with lunch in a restaurant in Cordoba

Guided tour of Cordoba, once capital of the Emirs and Caliphs, located on the north bank of the Guadalquivir, a living example of various cultures. A successful harmony between Muslim, Jewish and Catholic people has marked the city with an incomparable architectural richness. The superb Mezquita (mosque/cathedral) is, without doubt, an emblem of this past splendour.

Free evening in Seville

**Day 3 Seville ~ Isla Minima ~ El Puerto de Santa Maria**

Morning: Guided tour of Seville including the four bridges that cross the canal and represent the four ancient kingdoms of Spain. The tour continues towards the Alcazar, a real oasis in the heart of Seville which is made up of palaces and an extraordinary garden, where generations of monarchs have left their mark. In addition, a visit to one of the world's largest gothic cathedrals.

Afternoon: Cruise to Isla Minima where there will be an afternoon excursion to an authentic Andalusian hacienda, situated on the edge of the Guadalquivir, where the owner has created a model farm. It will be followed by an equestrian show.

Evening: Entertainment

During the night the ship will navigate towards El Puerto de Santa Maria.

**Day 4 El Puerto de Santa Maria ~ Jerez ~ Cadiz**

Morning: Guided panoramic tour of Jerez. Visit to a stud farm with magnificent Andalusian horses and attend a show demonstrating the amazing equestrian traditions of the country. This will be followed by wine tasting in a bodega (wine cellar).

Cruise to Cadiz.

Afternoon: Depart on a panoramic tour of Cadiz where one can appreciate the beauty of its bay. The old city centre brings together the most typical districts of the city with superb baroque churches and elegant mansions, many of which are adorned with facades painted in delicate pastel colours. Visit its magnificent cathedral.

Evening: Departure on foot from the ship for a flamenco evening. Flamenco is an art created by the gypsy and Andalusian people, based on popular folklore from the various cultures that flourished throughout the centuries in Spain.

**Day 5 Alcoutim ~ Huelva**

Early morning the ship will rejoin the Guadiana river. Cruising along the river towards Alcoutim (Portugal), the gentle curves and appealing landscapes have a relaxing affect. Arrive Alcoutim mid-morning. This small town is built on the side of a hill in a curve of the river. Free time to explore and stroll this old Portuguese town with cobbled streets and whitewashed houses.

Cruise to Huelva arriving in the evening.

**Evening:** entertainment

**Day 6 Huelva ~ Seville**

Morning: Guided tour of Huelva, with a visit to the Franciscan monastery with its gothic-mudejar style, which was built between the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. The town is famous for being the province from which Christopher Columbus planned and sailed off on his first voyage of exploration to the New World in 1492. Visit the Caravel Park where there are life-size replicas of the three expedition ships of Christopher Columbus, namely Pina, Nina and Santa Maria,

Afternoon and evening: Navigation back to Seville

**Day 7 Seville ~ Granada**

Full day excursion to discover Granada (2 hours both ways).

Visit the Alhambra, one of the major monuments of Moorish architecture. Continue to the Generalife, summer residence of the Arab Nasrid princes, and its 14<sup>th</sup> century gardens.

Lunch in a restaurant in the town centre.

Free afternoon to visit the Albacyn district which there are lovely views of the area and the Sierra Nevada.

Evening: Gala dinner

**Day 8**

Disembarkation from the ship at 09h00 after breakfast.

(Luggage can be left on the ship).

Free morning in Seville and, for those who may be interested, take the “Hop on/hop off” bus around the town, with its various stops, to revisit places of interest.

Depart from pier **Paseo de las Delicias** at 13h00 for airport.

Flight Easyjet : Depart Seville 16h05. Arrive Geneva 18h30

**DETAILS AND PRICES****“All inclusive” cruise comprising:-**

Return flights Geneva to Seville

Air-conditioned cabins with shower, WC, hairdryer, safe, telephone, television, WIFI

Full board including all drinks at table and in the bar

10 excursions

Entertainment

**Price per person**

Middle deck	Double cabin	2,908
Euro Middle deck	Individual cabin	3,527
Euro Superior deck	Double cabin	
2,974 Euro Superior deck	Individual cabin	
3,593 Euro		

**INSCRIPTION**

Email: [c.hager@bluewin.ch](mailto:c.hager@bluewin.ch)

or by post: Charles Hager, rte de Chêne 64C, CH 1208 Geneva, Switzerland

## ARTICLE BY ALAIN VESSEREAU IN QUARTERLY NEWS No. 100

JULY 2015

QNT 100

*25 years!*

*25 years! Our Association had just been created! Already a quarter of a century ago but memories come flooding back and jostle together*

We had taken the plunge, pushed on by the need to take action. Those who had gone before us into their new life as a retiree had advised us how hard it could be to resolve, alone, unforeseen difficulties and even to know who to call on when needed. The draw-bridge of retirement had been reached but for those of us who had played an active role in the Staff Association Committee, we did not want to just stand around with our arms folded! We dared to believe that we still had a lot to offer to help our retired colleagues both individually and collectively.

However, from the beginning we set criteria for the Association – it should not become a syndicate but should be structured around three equal principles – friendship, solidarity and efficiency – a motto for engraving on the wall of our office, if we had had one. We especially did not want an Association without a “soul” and the intention was not to let material and financial matters take over at the expense of social and cultural aspects.

It was on this basis that, on 19 June 1989, we sent out a call to join us.

The responses were so rapid, so many and so enthusiastic that within a few weeks any doubt was unthinkable and we could confirm that the Association was created and that a provisional group had been set up to organize elections.

The Association could just have been an extension of the Staff Association, to which it was still provisionally attached for administrative and logistical reasons, but it was much more than that because the group was privileged to comprise not only as many G as P staff but also an Assistant Director-General (ADG) and a Director of Administration, both recently retired. Thus we had a rare example, perhaps unique, of a structure uniting for the common good and creating mutual respect between those who might have been on opposite sides in the past.

I can still see our faces like old children studiously bent over our first files, still empty, very surprised to find ourselves

collaborating so closely after having shed the labels stuck to us not so long ago and which had placed us in such or such category.

Thus constituted, we thought the Association could move mountains. Even from the beginning the main preoccupations centred of course on pensions and health insurance.

With regard to pensions, they were reliant on the enormous machinery of the UN Joint Staff Pension Fund – we could not envisage how to take any action. However, the Association’s role became immediately apparent, judging by the amount of information and advice which could be exchanged about this complex system.

Health insurance offered more possibilities for action and impact in view of its specific character within the Organization. In just dealing with controlling the rules and their application within WHO, their definition and amendments have a direct impact on members and their families and it was necessary to be at the centre of this mechanism.

One of the first actions was therefore to reactivate the request that a retiree be one of the members designated to represent participants on the Health Insurance Surveillance Committee. This request had been dragging on for about 4-5 years and had been submitted for the first time while I was still working and was the Chairman of the Surveillance Committee. Repeatedly requested each year and having been turned down by the representatives of the Administration until finally the Committee accepted the presence of an “observer”. It was a definite step forward and from the end of 1989 the health insurance rules created a seat on the Surveillance Committee for a retiree with the same rights as the other members representing active staff or the administration. In order to fully understand the major progress thus made by our young Association, suffice it to say that in many other international organizations in Geneva and elsewhere, retirees do not even

JULY 2015

QNT 100

---

**25 years!**

---

have observer status in their health insurance committees. When the recent “revolution” happened in the health insurance governance, the fact that the representatives of retirees had collaborated effectively for more than 20 years in the management of the health insurance, explains that there was no hesitation in proposing to them to have elected retiree representatives in the new committees.

There are so many other things to say about what has paved the way for the Association today! However, it is impossible not to underline the irreplaceable and constant place of its journal – the *Quarterly News* and our celebration of its the simple photocopied one page played

100<sup>th</sup> issue. From the early days, even an essential communication role and it was entrusted to competent and enthusiastic colleagues. This has never been refuted and everyone will recognize that, during the past few years, the high standards we thought we had reached have been excelled. Thus, a quarter of a century later, we can look back with satisfaction on our Association which fills the role for which it was destined at the beginning. It remains faithful to its commitment to represent and protect the interests of its members and often plays an active role in groups and circles which work on social and cultural activities for retirees.

***Alain Vessereau***

## PHOTOS FROM THE AFSM-WPR GENERAL ASSEMBLY, 16 NOVEMBER 2023



Photo 1: Registration. 2: Address by DG, Dr Tedros, on Zoom. 3: Address by DDG, Dr Zsuzanna Jakab. 4: SHI Briefing. 5: WPRO Staff Association Chair, Dr Ada Moadsiri and the AFICS President. 6: Report by AFSM-WPR President, Linda Milan. 7: Some of the participants of the AFSM-WPR General Assembly.



**PHOTOS FROM THE AFSM-WPR COURTESY CALL ON THE NEW REGIONAL DIRECTOR**



The AFSM-WPR committee make a Courtesy Call on the new Regional Director, **Dr Saia Ma'u Piukala** with **DDG Dr Jakab** on 6 February 2024