JANUARY 2025

NEWSLETTER

Association of Former International Civil Servants - Philippines

President's Message



Alcestis A. Mangahas
President
AFICS-PHL 2024-2026

Twenty twenty-four! 2024! What an intensely dynamic year!

Energized by our General Assembly and elections, AFICS set a high bar with the active pace of its first semester activities. These included our first-ever strategic planning exercise. A milestone. A moment to define our way forward. Then came our *Telekwentuhan on the Road* with a visit to the Likha Verde in Lipa, Batangas. Inspiration to healthier lifestyle. Plus we launched an intensive membership campaign with the support of the UN Joint Staff Pension Fund.

The pace further accelerated in the second semester. AFICS fielded a full delegation that participated actively at the July 2024 54th FAFICS Council Meeting in Bangkok. To celebrate the UN's 79th Anniversary in October, we hosted a successful dinner-dance that established record attendance. The first AFICS international tour to Japan's Nagoya, Takayama, and Kanizawa in November brought high membership interest, solidarity, and friendship among attendees. Furthermore, the tour happily contributed to AFICS financial sustainability.

Two information events capped the year. The Telekwentuhan in November centered on the rise of cybercrime and the ways retirees could prevent becoming victims of fraud. The visit of UNFCU's key officers to Manila, Tim Challen and Anthony Kiyimba, occasioned an impromptu get-together at the UN House for many UN retirees.

Even with its pitfalls, digital technology allows many innovative ways to expand our outreach. We have recently finalized our Memorandum of Agreement with the Bureau of Jails Management and Penology to support "E-Dalaw", an innovative prisoners' virtual visit and consultation project. The initiative is small but has great potential for expansion.

We look forward to additional memorable milestones this 2025. FAFICS, our global federation, marks its golden (50th!) anniversary in July. The UN celebrates its 80th year in October and AFICS-Philippines will be on its 16th year.

Our association is organizing a series of events for these anniversaries – in joyful solidarity with the UN family and the Philippine community it serves.

As always, we are grateful for the many who have supported AFICS-PHL efforts. Your encouragement and support have been inspiring. *Maraming, maraming salamat sa lahat!*

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AFICS-PHL Prepares for 2025 Annual General Assembly

AFICS-PHL is set to hold its Annual General Assembly on January 26, 2025, Sunday. The event will adopt a hybrid format, accommodating both online and in-person participants.

Key items on the agenda include the President's Report, the Treasurer's Financial Status Report, updates on the new Financial Management System Guide, and insights from the recent pensioner survey. Additionally, the meeting will feature announcements about the planned homecoming of members, scheduled for October 2025.

To add excitement, attendees can look forward to games with prizes and a raffle draw supported by generous donations from members.

The venue of the meeting will be at the Auditorium of the Social Weather Stations in Quezon City.

Regular and associate members in good standing are encouraged to attend and participate in this significant event.

AFICS-PHL Marks 79th UN Anniversary

by Lois Villanueva



AFICS members and guests gathered on October 19, 2024 to celebrate the 79th Anniversary of the UN, hosted by AFICS-PHL.

It was another outstanding UN celebration, this time for its 79th anniversary in 2024! Kudos to AFICS-PHL for a top-notch commemoration held on October 19, 2024 at the McKinley Clubhouse! The anniversary was an electrifying celebration, filled with vibrant energy, a delightful buffet spread, and non-stop entertainment of music, singing, and dancing.

Off to a good start. With the theme "Working for Sustainable Development", Reggie Molera of AFICS-PHL, serving as the emcee, ensured a smooth start to the evening. The program featured an inspiring video message from Mr. Gustavo Gonzalez, the UN Resident Coordinator in the Philippines, followed by a warm welcome from Thetis Mangahas, President of AFICS-PHL.

Mr. Matija Kovac, Head of the UN Resident Coordinator's Office in the Philippines, delivered a brief yet heartfelt congratulatory speech, setting an uplifting tone for the evening. He then led the toast, symbolizing the collective commitment to making the world a better place.

To conclude the opening program, a carefully crafted video highlighted the United Nations' efforts in promoting sustainable development, alongside AFICS-PHL's outreach initiatives, offering a deeper understanding of both organizations' mandates and achievements.



The dinner-dance provided a wonderful opportunity for friends to reconnect and pose for photos.

Very well-attended. The event was packed, with an estimated 100 people in attendance, including AFICS members, the UN team in the Philippines, and the solid presence of members of the Zonta Club. A photo session was organized by numbered tables, followed by an invitation for guests to enjoy the delicious buffet dinner. Ten fortunate guests won special gift items, generously donated by AFICS members, in the raffle during the event.







The night featured guest performances and nearly non-stop dancing for everyone.

Vibrant performances and entertainment. The evening's entertainment unfolded with music, joy, and lively energy filling the room. Guests danced to an exciting variety of songs, led by our talented host and performer, Kate, who sang an extensive repertoire of dance music, spanning styles from the cha-cha to the twist.

The attendees had short breaks from the energetic dancing with Mira, the daughter of Mr. Matija Kovac, surprising the crowd with a catchy and lively pop song that the guests received warmly. The mood stayed cheerful with familiar favorites performed by Dr. Mahar Mangahas, Ms. Sarah Ducusin, and Atty. Hector Soliman, bringing smiles and a sense of nostalgia. After the short breaks, the dance floor was soon buzzing again, filled with people line dancing, swinging, and jiggling.

A tremendous success. The 79th UN Anniversary event, marked by the AFICS-PHL community and their partners, was not only a celebration of past accomplishments but also a reaffirmation of their dedication to a brighter, more sustainable development future for all. As the night progressed, the energy in the room never waned and truly fostered warm connections, cherished moments, and joyful bonding among members of AFICS and their guests.



As part of the opening program, AFICS members and guests caught the heartwarming video message from UNRC Gustavo Gonzalez followed by an earnest congratulations from Head of the UNRC Office Matija Kovac, and AFICS President Thetis Mangahas' welcome.

For this year, AFICS-PHL is gearing up to have the 80th UN Anniversary to be in tandem with a homecoming event for all Filipinos who have served in various capacities as part of the United Nations.

New AFICS-PHL Members Welcomed

by Anna Senga

The year 2024 has been a remarkable period for AFICS-PHL with its significant success in recruitment. From February 2024, we have now FORTY-FIVE (45) new AFICS members: 22 are Regular Lifetime members; 11 are Regular Annual members; 9 are Associate Annual Members; 1 is an Associate Lifetime member; and 2 are given free membership as they are 85 years and above.

The increase in new members can be largely attributed to the AFICS introductory letter that the UN Joint Pension Fund (UNJSPF) had graciously sent to all pensioners and beneficiaries in the Philippines. This window was facilitated by Kissa O'Donnell, UNJSPF Chief of Operations who was the invited resource person during the January 2024 AFICS-PHL Annual General Assembly. The letter resulted in individuals expressing their interest in joining our association.

The more active recruitment strategy was pursued under the leadership of Thetis Mangahas, President of AFICS-PHL who enjoined all AFICS officers and members of the Committees during their two-year term to recruit at least one retiree.

Additionally, the WHO Association of Former Staff Members (WHO WPRO AFSM) contributed significantly by recruiting members for AFICS during their annual General Assembly.

The new recruits bring the total number of AFICS-PHL members in the roll to 287: 138 are Regular Lifetime members; 24 are Regular Annual members; 19 are Associate Lifetime members; 85 are Associate Annual members; and 6 are with free membership as they belong to the 85 years and above age category. There are 15 members whose data are currently being verified.

AFICS-PHL endeavours to reach out to the most number of former UN staff members, but recruitment is not its only concern. While total membership is 287, not all of them are engaged in the association's activities. This is why it is important that AFICS is able to communicate regularly with each member to help ensure that each member's information in the AFICS database is up-to-date. To date, there are 128 members who have not updated their membership status. An email will be sent requesting to update the information in the database. Rest assured that the information to be gathered will only be used for the organization's needs and will not be shared with any other entity.

The 80th Anniversary of the UN which will be commemorated by AFICS-PHL this October 2025 with a General Homecoming. It will also be an opportunity to welcome more former international civil servants and to engage more AFICS members. Please watch out for the homecoming date. We hope to see you there!

The New AFICS Members
(Listed alphabetically by last names)

Joey Aguilar – *UNFPA*
Isabel Aleta - *WHO*
Liza Andres – *UNFCCC*
Mel Arada -*WFP*
Al Barbo – *UNAMID*
Wiliam Barriga – *IOM*
Charlie Batalla – *UNSOM*
Mon Blanco -*UNDP*
Judith Bruno – *UNICEF*
Jun Cacho- *WHO*
Lori Calvo - *UNICEF*
Irene Camarines -*UNAMA*
Manolet Dayrit – *WHO*
Sarah Domingo – *IOM*
Nonoy Fajardo – *UNICEF*
Tonton Fenómeno- *UNICEF*
Marlyn Filio – *UNAIDS*
Guia Flores - *WHO*
Pamela Gonzalez – *WHO*
Ruth Leano- *UNICEF*
Bernardo Lim-*UNFPA*
Frances Lim -*UNDP*
Ron Magnaye- *UNICEF*
Heidi Mendoza – *UN OIOS*
Tess Narciso – *WHO*
Otik Ortiz – *DPKO MONUSCO*
Ray Padua – *UNMIT*
Catalina Panganiban - *WHO*
May Pascual- *UNICEF*
James Paw – *IMO*
Roseller Regencia – *IOM*
Lette Rodriguez- *UNDP*
Luz Rodriguez – *UN WOMEN*
Leyda Sabas – *FAO*
Benilda Santos - *WHO*
Lesty Santos – *UNICEF*
Allan Schapira – *WHO*
Bodgie Ta-asan – *WFP*
Catherine Tan - *WHO*
Letty Tenoria – *UNICEF*
Binnie Uy - *WHO*
Lalaine Velez - *WHO*
Elsa Ventura – *WHO*
Tacing Verceles – *UNFPA*
Edgardo Yu- *WFP*

Telekwentuhan Series: Avoiding Online and Mobile Fraud

by Ces Adorna

Seniors are often targeted by scammers due to their vulnerability, warned Engineer Luis "Chito" Jacinto, an experienced banking security expert.

Speaking to seventy online and face-to-face participants to the *AFICS Telekwentuhan on Cyber Security*, Engr. Jacinto said that scammers deliberately prey on seniors, especially those with financial resources and who would lack the technical skills needed to effectively protect themselves from such threats. The Telekwentuhan was held on November 26, 2024 at the UP School of Economics.



Engineer Chito Jacinto (third from left), resource person of Telekwentuhan on Cyber Security, *is flanked by both AFICS-PHL and UP School of Economics colleagues in this photo.*

Engr. Jacinto is a retired Chief Information Security Officer from both the Philippine National Bank and Rizal Commercial Banking Corporation. He is an Information Technology (IT) practitioner, a training professional, and an educator. He is currently an Adjunct Lecturer for the Executive Diploma Program in Cyber Security at the De La Salle-College of St. Benilde.

The session addressed common types of scams, red flags to watch for, steps to protect oneself, and actions to take if scammed. Engr. Jacinto shared several helpful resources for assistance and information in cases of cybercrime.

The session was highly interactive, with lively questions from both online and face-to-face participants. The event was organized by Telekwentuhan Chairperson Ces Adorna.



The Telekwentuhan on Cyber Security *with over 70 participants, organized by AFICS-PHL, was the last Telekwentuhan series for 2024.*

To help protect members, their families and associates from scammers, Engr. Jacinto's presentation and the questions and answers were recorded and will be made available.

Participants to the Telekwentuhan came from AFICS-PHL as well as their relatives and friends, retirees, staff of UN agencies, Helen Keller, UP Los Banos, 1973 alumni of the University of Santo Tomas, AFICS India and Myanmar, and colleagues from the private sector. Also present were the Dean of the UP School of Economics and her team, who graciously hosted the event.

Telekwentuhan, commonly referred to as TK, is a flagship project of the Communications Group of AFICS-PHL. Two TK sessions are organized annually, with the recently concluded Cyber Security TK being the second and final session for 2024.

Remember these: 2025 Anniversaries



- **50th Anniversary of FAFICS** (established in 1975)
- **80th Anniversary of the United Nations** (created in 1945)

Let's celebrate these milestones together as we reflect on years of dedication and service!

Mark your calendars!

Partnership between AFICS-PHL and AFSM/ WPRO Affirmed

by Dr. Linda Milan

More than 80 members and guests convened at the General Assembly of the WHO Association of Former Staff Members in the Western Pacific Region (AFSM/WPR) at the WHO Regional Offices in Manila on December 5, 2024.

Dr. Tamas Landesz, WHO/WPRO Officer-in-Charge and Director for Administration and Finance, welcomed attendees and praised AFSM-WPR as a global model for fostering partnerships between retirees and WHO leadership. He highlighted the significance of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed in October 2023 which formalized this collaboration.



Over 80 members and guests of the WHO Association of Former Staff Members gathered at the their Annual General Assembly to discuss key activities focused on retirees' well-being.

Dr. Landesz stated his personal and the Administration team's full commitment to support AFSM/WPR's initiatives, particularly those enhancing health insurance and pension benefits for retirees and current staff.

The event was an opportunity to highlight the growing partnership between AFICS-PHL and AFSM.

Thetis Mangahas, President of AFICS-PHL urged WHO retirees to actively participate in AFICS activities, particularly in this year's upcoming celebrations for the UN's 80th anniversary and the Federation of AFICS' 50th anniversary. Reaffirming AFICS' mission, Thetis underscored the association's dedication to promoting the well-being of former UN civil servants and upholding UN principles.

AFSM President Dr. Linda Milan, who sits as an ex-oficio member of the AFIC-PHL Executive Board, underscored that the AFSM 2024 activites were aimed at informing, connecting, and promoting WHO retirees' well-being, especially those who needed special assistance. She also affirmed advancing the goals outlined in the MOU between WHO leaders and the AFSM and acknowledged the collaboration with AFICS-PHL. Treasurer Lou Rodriguez provided the financial report of the association, ensuring transparency and accountability.

AFICS PHILIPPINES

VISION

Inspired by the values and principles of the United Nations and enriched by members' experiences in the service of the UN, AFICS is an association committed to promoting the well-being of former UN civil servants and fostering their social engagement.

MISSION

1. *AFICS shall be the platform of former UN staff to continue to be active contributors to the purposes and principles of the UN;*
2. *AFICS shall serve as the voice of former UN staff by providing members a venue to express and exchange matters of importance;*
3. *AFICS shall mobilize and expand active membership and sustainable funding resources;*
4. *AFICS shall be a center and hub of information, knowledge, and support on pension, health and other benefits and opportunities for members; and*
5. *AFICS shall provide channels to foster camaraderie and care for its members.*

Networking with the UN Continues

by Anna Senga

On 20 September 2024, the AFICS-PHL delegation led by President Thetis Mangahas met with UN Resident Coordinator (UNRC) Mr. Gustavo Gonzalez. The delegation members were Dr. Linda Milan, Jana Ricasio, and Anna Senga.

During the meeting, UNRC Gonzalez acknowledged AFICS-PHL's outreach efforts and praised its role in organizing the 2024 October UN Day event. He expressed enthusiasm for joint initiatives, particularly in preparation for the UN's 80th Anniversary this year.



The October 2024 meeting between the UNRC and AFICS was part of ongoing efforts to strengthen cooperation and partnership.

A key outcome of the meeting was the agreement to explore the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding to formalize collaboration. UNRC Gonzalez also assured the use of UN facilities for pre-retirement seminars as an arrangement to support AFICS-PHL's programs for UN retirees and staff members.

This pivotal meeting capped a series of engagements throughout 2024 aimed at strengthening partnerships within the UN system in the Philippines:

- On 11 June 2024, during discussions with the **UN Human Resources Inter-Agency Task Force**, AFICS-PHL introduced its mission and identified possible key areas for collaboration, including pre-retirement seminar and other support for retirees.

- On 13 August 2024, in a meeting with Mr. Matija Kovac, head of the **UN Resident Coordinator's Office** (UNRC), the focus was on enhancing cooperation to align AFICS-PHL's initiatives with the UN's strategic priorities in the Philippines.



The AFICS delegation had a photo taken with UNRC Gustavo Gonzalez during the meeting. Pictured (from left to right) are Anna Senga, Linda Milan, Thetis Mangahas, and Jana Ricasio.

- On 14 August 2024, AFICS-PHL met with the chairs and officers of the **UN Staff Associations** in the Philippines to explore potential joint activities, such as community engagement projects and advocacy campaigns.

These meetings have yielded the start of concrete outcomes, including commitments to shared goals, access to resources, and the groundwork for a formalized partnership. Together, they underscore AFICS-PHL's dedication to fostering collaboration and advancing the well-being of UN retirees while contributing to the broader objectives of the UN system in the Philippines.

The various meetings support AFICS-PHL's vision of enriching members' experiences and continuing service aligned to the purposes and principles of the UN.

Call for contributions from members for articles and photos

We would like to know your stories. About your past work with the UN. Your advocacies. Your travels.

Send your stories with accompanying photos to:

philippinesafics@gmail.com

Adventures Galore!

First-ever International AFICS-PHL Fundraising Tour Lauded!

by Lois Villanueva



Adventures off the beaten track! This captured the essence of the successful international fundraising tour of AFICS-PHL members, their families, and friends in Central Japan from October 27 to November 2, 2024.

The tour marked AFICS-PHL's first-ever fundraising initiative which was met with widespread praise for its creativity and impact. The initiative aimed to raise funds for AFICS' programs while also ensuring enjoyment and fostering camaraderie among its members and supporters.

AFICS members Lois Villanueva, Jana Ricasio, and Tony Fernandez successfully organized the tour. The 29 tour participants enjoyed their unforgettable journey through the heart of Japan's autumn beauty through Nagoya, Takayama, Toyoma, Tateyama, Kanazawa, Shirakawago, and Gokayama.

AFICS-PHL President Thetis Mangahas expressed gratitude to the participants and organizers, highlighting the importance of such activities in advancing the association's mission to support former UN civil servants and promote the principles of the UN.

She added, "This tour is a testament to what we can achieve when we come together for a shared purpose."

Participants explored UNESCO World Heritage sites, including the iconic Gassho-zukuri farmhouses at Gokayama



Participants had fun playfully holding up a tree, all while enjoying Japan's autumn scenery.

and Shirakawago, immersing themselves in the region's rich culture and architecture. They visited traditional homes and enjoyed the scenery, capturing memories with photos of their experience.

History came alive as they embarked on a walking tour of castles, samurai districts, ninja temples, geisha houses, and tea houses which still captured the rural charm from the Edo period.

The tour also included visits to vibrant markets to explore Kanazawa's food and drink culture. Memorable were Hida beef, kaisendon, DIY sashimi, and tempura.

But what stunned all the participants was the spectacular mountain scenery and breathtaking autumn foliage of the Northern Japan Alps and Tateyama Kurobe Alpine Route, known as the roof of Japan.

Aside from the beautiful scenes of Japan, the participants, said it was not just a memorable tour — it was a valuable opportunity for sharing, networking, and strengthening bonds. Even now, the tour participants continue to share ideas and experiences through an informal network they have established.



29 AFICS members and guests enjoyed the October 27 to November 2, 2024 trip to Central Japan.



The participants to the fundraising international tour were awed by the beautiful colors of Central Japan's autumn.

Proceeds from the tour will fund future AFICS-PHL projects, including assistance programs for retirees in need and community engagement activities. Plans are already underway to make this fundraising tour an annual tradition.

Trio Gallivanters Enjoy South Africa

by Delia Barcelona

Three AFICS-PHL members (Lois Villanueva, Tess Stuart, and Delia Barcelona) went on an adventure to South Africa with a group of friends from their UN/academic circles/ professional and social networks. This network was spearheaded by their great friend, Ronny Adhikarya, from about 5 decades ago when most of them met in a training course at the East-West Center in Hawaii.

This network, aptly called, Friends of Ronny (or FOR) has had travel adventures in Honolulu in 2016, in Italy in 2019, and the latest in Capetown, South Africa.

The FOR network has plans to visit Argentina in 2025 or 26 and possibly the Philippines as one of its planned reunions.



(Left to right) Lois, Tess, and Delia took part in an enjoyable South African tour.

UNFCU Seminar Brings Together UN Retirees

by Tess Stuart

On November 27, 2024, AFICS-PHL hosted a dynamic seminar on the United Nations Federal Credit Union (UNFCU), providing vital updates and insights for UN retirees. This engaging event followed the *Telekwentuhan on Cyber Security*, which was held the day prior.



AFICS members were briefed on UNFCU's programs and priorities during a November 27, 2024 session with Tim Challen and Antony Diyimba of UNFCU.

The UNFCU seminar took place at the UN House in the Rockwell Business Center, Mandaluyong City, Metro Manila. It featured a hybrid format that welcomed both in-person attendees and virtual participants. Timothy Challen and Anthony Kiyimba are dedicated Member Service Representatives from the UNFCU who led the session. Both resource persons are based at the UN Regional Headquarters in Nairobi.



Participants to the seminar enjoyed gathering more information regarding UNFCU and were privileged to have one-on-one consultations with the resource persons.

Using a comprehensive PowerPoint presentation, Tim covered a range of topics, including digital account management, the UNFCU's diverse product offerings, strategies for combating credit card fraud, and the organization's commitment to exceptional customer service.

He encouraged an interactive environment by pausing for questions, ensuring that participants could engage directly with him and Anthony. The seminar concluded with valuable one-on-one consultations as attendees had the opportunity to discuss their individual concerns with Tim and Anthony, fostering a personalized experience.

Overall, the event not only served as an informative session but also as a joyful reunion for friends and colleagues, highlighting the strong community among UN retirees. It was a productive morning filled with learning and camaraderie, reinforcing the importance of staying connected and informed in today's fast-paced digital world.

NEWS BITS From the Executive Committee

by Mi Ann Maglipon, *AFICS-PHL Secretary*

UN's 79th anniversay celebration

This is the second time that AFICS-PHL planned and implemented the celebration of the United Nation's birth through a gathering of its members, UN representatives, and friends. The October 19, 2024 event surpassed the huge success of 2023 as it welcomed over 100 guests enjoying the opening program that focused on the work of the United Nations and AFICS-PHL, followed by dinner, songs, and dances. *(See pages 2-3.)*

Digital Certificate of Entitlement (DCE).

The Committee on Pension and Benefits, headed by Marlene Arduo, is reminding members to open the UNJSPF Digital Certificate of Entitlement (DCE) link starting January 2025.

The Committee noted that emails have been sent by UNJSPF directly to all members to guide them on how to have their respective 2025 DCE issued.

Outreach Committee pushes for E-Dalaw

AFICS-PHL, through its Outreach Committee, is supporting women deprived of their liberty to have more access to the Bureau of Jail and Penology's E-Dalaw initiative.

The E-Dalaw service provides a modern alternative to in-person visits, enabling Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDL) to communicate with their families through supervised online video calls and chats. The program is designed to assist PDL who have limited visits from their respective families due to distance, cost, and other factors.

Additionally, the E-Dalaw also enables PDL to consult with their lawyers. During jail lockdowns due to public health emergencies, E-Dalaw grants all PDL access to this service. In principle, access to E-Dalaw is on a fair rotation basis to ensure equal opportunities to use the service. However, there are still limited E-Dalaw electronic devices vis-à-vis those who need to access the service.

AFICS-PHL is focusing on helping women deprived of liberty have better access to E-Dalaw by providing additional electronic devices. As part of the cooperation, AFICS will provide electronic tablets to the Marikina City Jail this year to allow electronic family visits and legal consultation. Aside from donations, funds for the tablets are sourced from proceeds from the 2023 and 2024 UN Anniversary celebration auction and ticket sales. The Outreach Committee is co-chaired by Ric Casco and Bai Bagasao.

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AFICS-PHL communication materials and website

The Communications Committee of AFICS-PHL provided information products to support the various activities of AFICS-PHL including, but not limited to the October 2024 celebration of the 79th anniversary of the UN.

The materials include the updated AFICS-PHL brochure, June 2024 newsletter, and various PowerPoint presentations.

The committee continues to manage the association's Facebook page. The focus of the committee in 2025 is the association's website. The committee is chaired by Vice President Delia Barcelona.



Several communication materials were produced in 2024. Establishing the AFICS-PHL website is the Communications Committee's major project for 2025.

Financial Management System and Procedures (FMSP)

The Financial Management System and Procedures (FMSP) was successfully drafted by the Finance and Fund Development Committee in 2024.

The objective of the FMSP is to document and provide clarity in the management of the financial affairs of the association, including ensuring good internal controls, transparency, and accountability through regular reporting mechanisms.

Jana Ricasio, as chairperson of the Committee, submitted the document for the Executive Committee's review. The committee expressed its appreciation for the work of the Finance and Fund Development Committee and endorsed the document to the Board of Trustees for approval.

The FMSP is a landmark document that further strengthens the operations of AFICS-PHL. The document is one of the agenda items during the coming 2025 Annual General Assembly Meeting.

UPDATES FROM FAFICS

by Delia Barcelona, *FAFICS Secretary*

FAFICS 54th Council Session

The AFICS-PHL delegation contributed actively to the discussions and activities during the 54th FAFICS Council held on July 17-21, 2024 at ESCAP in Bangkok.

The delegation, headed by Mary Ann Maglipon, was composed of Marlene Arduo (accompanied by her son Larry John), and Tony Fernandez (accompanied by his wife Nanette). Marlyn Filio also attended some of the sessions. Unfortunately, AFICS President Thetis Mangahas had to cancel her plans to join the meeting in Bangkok at the last minute. However, she still provided valuable inputs to the discussion via online.



The delegation to the FAFICS 54th Council Session: (seated, left to right) *Mi Ann Maglipon, Tony Fernandez, and Marlene Arduo;* (standing, left to right) *Marlyn Filio and Delia Barcelona. Delia was present as FAFICS Secretary.*

One of the key agenda items in the meeting was to look into the review of small pensions.



The FAFICS 54th Council Session was held at ESCAP in Bangkok from July 17-21, 2024.

AFICS-PHL Vice President and Communications Chair Delia Barcelona, serving as FAFICS Secretary, managed preparatory and on-site tasks for the council meeting, including coordinating with presenters and host AFICS-Thailand, consolidating session documents, and working closely with ESCAP's support staff.

It should be noted that Marlene serves as the alternate representative to the UNJSPF Pension Board Committee. Lydia Ontal, a long-standing pillar of FAFICS, joined some sessions virtually from New Jersey.

For the first time, the FAFICS Council session took place in Asia, coinciding with the UNJSPF Pension Board's decision to hold its meeting in Bangkok. The report from the 54th FAFICS Council Session has been finalized and distributed to Member Associations.

FAFICS 55th Council (hybrid) Session and 50th Anniversary

The 55th Council Session of FAFICS is scheduled for July 14–18, 2025 in Vienna, Austria. This session marks a significant milestone as FAFICS celebrates 50 years since its founding in 1975.

A commemorative event will be held on the final day of the Council Session, July 18, 2025, at the Vienna International Centre.

This year promises to be a truly historic year.

Aside from FAFICS's anniversary coinciding with the UN's 80th year, it also marks 80 years since the end of World War II.

Plans for the FAFICS anniversary event include a message from UN Secretary-General António Guterres, a video on FAFICS activities, a panel on achievements and challenges, and a proposal for an International Day of Retired Civil Servants.

Member Associations are encouraged to mark the occasion locally as they see fit.

FAFICS new website launched in November 2024

The FAFICS website has been totally revamped with new features for easier maneuvering through various topics. Each Member Association can log in with a dedicated association-specific email address which can be shared with all individual members.

Lois Villanueva and Delia Barcelona are both part of the FAFICS Standing Committee that oversaw and coordinated the website revamp with Quatro Medio Digitales, based in Panama. We can learn from this experience in terms of designing our own AFICS-Philippines website next year.

Visit the FAFICS site at ***https:www.fafics.org***.

REAL LIFE STORIES: How AFICS Has Helped UN Retirees

My Own Story:
From an AFICS-PHL Lifetime Member and Officer

"I was 49 years old when I left the UN Centre for Regional Development in Nagoya for a 3-year contract with the Japanese government in another city in Japan in 2003. I opted for an early retirement at age 55. Returning to the Philippines in 2006, I was expecting some form of communication from the UNJSPF when I would be turning 55 in 2009. But it was only four years later, in May 2013, when I started receiving my pension.

"It was at the Christmas Party of UN retirees organized by Medy Kapunan, who headed the core group of UN retirees, in 2011 where I learned that Oscar Colmenar would be the right UNJSPF contact person. Ralph Diaz, who was elected AFICS president in February 2012, urged me to contact Oscar, a Filipino who was with the Pension Entitlements Section of UNJSPF. Oscar replied, giving me instructions on what to send.

"In his 9 July 2012 email, Oscar referred to an email dated 15 November 2010 sent from the UNJSPF which I did not receive. Exactly two years later, I finally could send the requirements. It took another six months for benefit payments to be deposited in the bank. AFICS-PHL was a big help!"

Antonio L. Fernandez, associate professorial lecturer at the Graduate School of the University of Santo Tomas, worked as Training Expert at the United Nations Centre for Regional Development, a project office funded by the Japanese Government reporting to the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

In one of the issues of the AFICS-PHL newsletter, we printed the case of a beneficiary, Bessie Aguirre, who shared her predicament as a widow. Lately, there were retirees whose names were included for pension suspension because of their failure to submit their certificate of entitlement. AFICS-PHL helped them with their certificate of entitlements which now is possible to obtain electronically.

There may be many UN retirees out there who may be in similar situations. Each case is surely unique and requires different resolutions. to resolve it. AFICS-PH is ready to help UN retirees or those soon to retire.

Please share your personal experience on how AFICS may have helped you. Send to ***philippinesafics@gmail.com.***

Healthy Ageing: Alleviating Joint Pain

by Tess Stuart

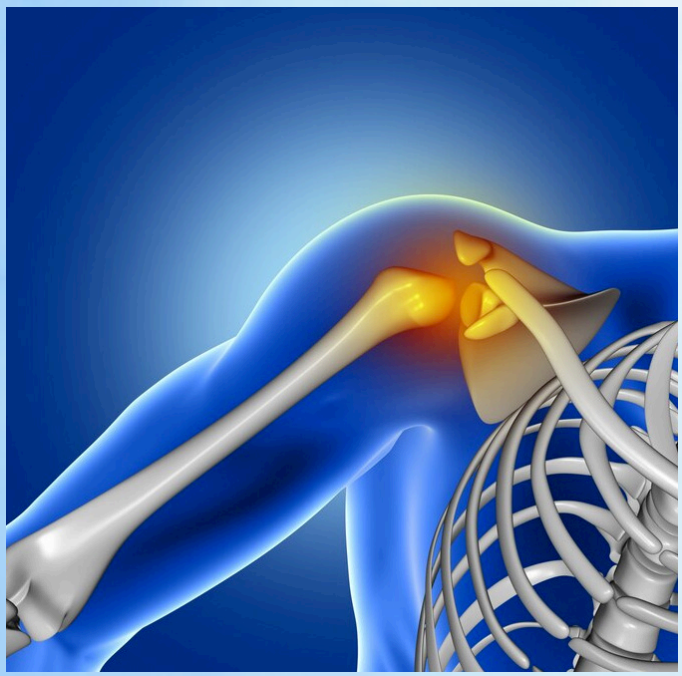


Image from the Internet

As we age, many of us face a common challenge: joint pain. I can personally relate, having dealt with knee pain and frozen shoulders. Fortunately, I have found relief through improved dietary choices and an active lifestyle.

My Journey with Joint Pain

Seven years ago, I underwent surgery to remove bunions from my feet, starting with my right foot. After hesitating for six years, I finally made the decision at age 74 to have the bunion on my left foot also removed. This choice was crucial; it meant either continuing my passion for ballroom and line dancing or letting pain dictate my life.

The bunions caused constant discomfort, making it difficult to enjoy dancing. Although I went ahead with the second surgery, complications extended my recovery to a year, during which I had to limit my activities, including traveling, walking, exercising, and dancing. Mobility issues forced me to use crutches, then a cane, and even request wheelchair assistance in airports and malls.

Halfway through my recovery, I began experiencing left knee discomfort. Shortly after my 75th birthday, I woke up with frozen shoulders. I realized that months of inactivity and a poor diet had taken their toll.

I took action! I did my research, ate the right foods, and reclaimed the activities I truly enjoyed. By embracing a nutritious diet and immersing myself in things I love—traveling, meeting friends, exercising, gardening, and dancing—I've alleviated my joint pain and transformed my quality of life.

Understanding Joint Pain

Here is some information that may help you too. Joint pain can stem from various factors, including:

- *Past Injuries:* Previous accidents, like falls. (Ten years ago, I fell from my bike landing on my left knee.)
- *Inflammation:* Conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis, tendonitis, and bursitis.
- *Weight:* Excess weight can place stress on joints.
- *Aging and Lifestyle:* Wear and tear on joints, family history, and a sedentary lifestyle can all contribute.

The lesson here is clear: don't wait until you're older to address issues like bunions or joint pain. Take action as soon as you notice discomfort.

Embracing Anti-Inflammatory Foods

Guided by my primary care provider and online research, I discovered the significant impact that dietary choices can have on joint health. Growing your own herbs can be a great way to ensure



Image from the Internet

you have fresh ingredients on hand. Here are key anti-inflammatory foods to incorporate into your diet:

- *Omega-3 Fatty Acids:* Found in fatty fish (like salmon, sardines (tamban), anchovies (dilis) small tuna (galunggong) and nuts (such as walnuts, squash seeds, and flaxseeds).

- *Colorful Fruits and Vegetables:* Fruits like blueberries, strawberries, papaya, avocado, guava, pineapple, and leafy greens like spinach, malunggay, pechay, cabbage, kangkong, and broccoli are rich in antioxidants.

- *Herbs and Spices:* Fresh herbs like parsley, cilantro, and basil, and spices such as garlic, onion, ginger, turmeric, oregano, cumin, cloves, and cinnamon can enhance flavor and provide anti-inflammatory benefits.

Staying Hydrated and Active

Hydration, along with a healthy natural diet, is crucial for joint health.

Aim to drink at least eight glasses of water daily to keep your joints lubricated. Reducing processed foods high in salt, sugar, and unhealthy fats is also essential for managing inflammation.

Today, I can proudly say that I have relief from my joint pain and improved my quality of life.

Remember, it's never too late to take charge of our health and enjoy our diamond years.



Tess Stuart enjoying one of her passions – dancing.

Resources for Further Reading

For those interested in learning more about joint health and dietary strategies for relief, consider the following resources:

1. *Arthritis Foundation* - Offers comprehensive resources on joint pain and management.

2. *Harvard Health* - Harvard Health Publishing - Provides articles on nutrition and its effects on joint health.

3. *Mayo Clinic* - Features information on joint pain causes, treatments, and dietary recommendations.

4. *National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases* - A reliable source for understanding arthritis and joint health.

Go search the internet for other interesting references!

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