

Former FAO and Other UN Staff Association

Associazione dei Pensionati della FAO e di altre Organizzazioni delle Nazioni Unite



Newsbrief 128
March 2026

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A Word from the President on Behalf of Your Executive Committee

The end of last year was marked by a very sad event for the members of FFOA - the demise of our President Edward (Ed) Seidler.

Ed's love for FFOA was testified, among other things, by the unrelenting care he was extending to the election process that was to take place in October last year. Unfortunately, he could not witness this important event in the life of FFOA.

A renewed group of retirees were about to be elected as members of the Executive Committee and a positive outlook was at the horizon when it became clear that 15 candidates were competing for 11 positions. The challenge for this new group was to continue the excellent reputation FFOA had gained over several years of outstanding results.

After my four years as President of FAFICS, the global federation that embraces more than 60 national UN retiree associations, and after a period of rest, I had become increasingly interested in rejoining my old "home". Ed and other colleagues encouraged me in this return but I hesitated. I made up my mind only when it was too late to share with Ed. I would like to remember also Ed's predecessor Alan Prien who was my mentor in making me join FFOA and throughout my "career" as a retiree.

Now that I am the new President, I have in front of me the challenge to continue the journey so successfully initiated by my predecessors.

My colleagues Angelika Wolf and Sino Mariano as new Vice-Presidents, Jakob Skoet as new General Secretary, Ruggero Becchis as Treasurer, the other colleagues in the Executive Committee, and I are committed to advance the good work of FFOA in all fields of true interest to the retirees from the Rome-based organizations. This will include pensions, health insurance schemes, social and cultural activities, travel and administrative and fiscal matters.

Marco Breschi
President, FFOA

Medical Insurance

Jakob Skoet, Lubna Alaman, Sino Tesfamariam

FFOA continued its active participation in the FAO FAC/MC advisory committee on medical insurance. In December the FAC/MC reviewed the performance during the first year of the current plan with CIGNA, which entered into force on 1 January 2025. Throughout 2025 both the BMIP and the MMBP plans experienced higher claims, due to rising medical costs, enhanced benefits and demographic trends among the participants. This would have called for considerable premium increases in 2026 based on the renewal formula in the CIGNA contract. However, according to the contract premium increases are capped at 8 percent. The FAC/MC thus recommended increases in the monthly premiums for both the BMIP and the MMBP of approximately 8 percent for both the Euro and the US Dollar plan, as well as an increase to EUR 340/USD 450 in the MMBP deductible amount, which had not been adjusted for many years. To enhance the sustainability of the voluntary MMBP plan FFOA called for efforts to encourage increased participation in the plan, particularly by active staff members. This will be reviewed in future FAC/MC meetings. The revised premiums became effective in January 2026.

One year has passed since IFAD concluded and signed the medical insurance contract with Cigna for the Basic Medical Insurance Plan (BMIP) and the Major Medical Benefits Plan (MMBP). The initial three-year term of the contract will expire on 31 December 2027, with the possibility of a two-year extension. The new contract introduced several enhancements to the benefits package, including expanded coverage for dental and optical care, psychotherapy, physiotherapy, hearing aids, an extended preventive check-up package, and custodial care. As a result of these improvements, annual premiums

increased by 6.8 percent for all participants. In line with the contractual provisions, at the end of 2025 all participants in the IFAD medical plan were invited to take part in a satisfaction survey. The results will be shared with all participants once the analysis of the feedback has been completed.

WFP has started implementing its health insurance scheme for 2026-27, following the “self-insurance” model with CIGNA as the administrator. The scheme includes all categories of WFP staff, including retirees. While the BMIP rates are higher than the previous contract (2024-2025), both for Euro and US Dollar tracks, the benefits have been considerably expanded. FFOA, as an active member of the WFP Health Insurance Board, will be monitoring how the new system works in the course of 2026, which would include a CIGNA satisfaction survey. WFP Social Security Division has sent out an email to all active staff and retirees on 30/12/2025 with the detailed rates and benefits. If any retiree has not received this Memo, kindly contact globalsocialsecurity@wfp.org for the detailed information.

Pension Matters

Under a separate note we recently informed members of the review launched by the UN General Assembly (UNGA) at its year end resolution to redesign our pension scheme with special attention to its costs and with the aim to reducing the financial burden for Member Nations.

While the UNGA resolution states that due regard will be paid to acquired rights, (meaning that existing pension benefit will not be touched?), one could expect that benefit schemes for current and future staff could be redesigned to configure a less generous pension package for future retirees.

The Pension Board is tasked with reviewing the pension benefit scheme and to

report periodically to the UNGA, while the final report is due by the end of 2028. An ad-hoc Pension Board Committee on Pensions will be formed to carry out this review

As usual this committee will comprise representatives of the Member Nations, of the Executive Heads (i.e., the organizations and Agencies), the group of Participants (staff members) and, last but not least, representatives from FAFICS (the global federation of national retiree associations like FFOA).

The FAFICS delegation as you know does not enjoy voting rights, but thanks to the knowledge, experience, qualifications and professional reputation of its members is always at the centre of the debate on all matters regarding retiree interests and, we can reassure you, it traditionally becomes a very effective and authoritative source of inspiration and leadership for key decisions usually taken by the Pension Board Committees.

The working group will call on other bodies, such as the Pension Administration, the Office of Investment Management, and the Consulting Actuaries, in order to evaluate the solvency and sustainability of the various options, as well as the preservation of acquired rights. During March, a small group will develop the Terms of Reference, scope of work, timelines, and estimated costs for the working group to be approved in April.

By April, FAFICS must be prepared to put our best people on the new plan review group – people with experience and good negotiating, speaking, and teamworking skills.

A report of the February Board session, including the decisions on the General Assembly-mandated review, can be found at the online UNJSPF Newsroom. This report also highlights the Fund's strong performance in both investments and in processing separations and beneficiary requests. As of 23 February 2026, the investments totalled over US \$110 billion.

In 2025, the Pension Administration processed separations within 15 days in over 95% of cases, despite a 33% increase in the number of separations.

Mr. Jay Pozenel, the second Vice-President of AFICS/NY, has been appointed as one of the four FAFICS representatives to the Pension Board. Mr. Pozenel possesses extensive relevant experience and demonstrates a strong dedication to advocating for FAFICS's interests. He replaces Mr Gerhard Schramek.

FFOA General Assembly 20 May - Mark your Calendar!

The 56th FFOA Annual General Assembly will be held on 20 May at IFAD, starting at 10.00. Mark the date on your calendar - your participation is important!

From the UN Bookshelf

Stephen Dembner

Ageing and Older Persons: Key International Resources – 2025 brings together the latest reports, policy briefs, data tools, training materials, and advocacy resources produced by international organizations and leading civil society networks during the year. This curated collection prepared by the UNECE Population Unit highlights new evidence, strategic guidance, and practical resources to support policy development, programme design, and awareness-raising on ageing and demographic change. Covering themes such as healthy ageing, ageism, demographic change, the human rights of older persons, labour market inclusion, lifelong learning, social protection, care systems, and intergenerational solidarity, the overview aims to serve as a quick reference for policymakers, practitioners, and advocates. It includes materials from United Nations

agencies, international organizations, regional bodies, and non-governmental organizations, with links to full texts and multimedia resources.

The complete document can be downloaded at <http://unece.org/statistics/documents/2025/12/informal-documents/ageing-and-older-persons-key-international>

NEWS FROM UN ORGANIZATIONS

FAO

New FAO global report highlights slow progress in expanding secure land tenure

The ownership, tenure or use rights of only 35 percent of the world's land is formally documented, according to the Status of Land Tenure and Governance, a new report released by FAO in February 2026.

Tenure security is a crucial catalyst of responsible land governance, and rights over the control of land and decision-making about its use enables better productive and environmentally sustainable decisions, fosters stability and peace and gives people the confidence to invest. While there has been some progress in establishing and expanding land tenure security and governance at the international and national policy levels, it has been slow, and its impact on the ground even slower, underscoring the need for stronger political commitment and inclusive policies.

Some 1.1 billion people, almost one in four of all adults, consider it likely they could lose the rights to some or all of their land and housing within the next five years, and this number has risen notably in the past few years, highlighted the report, produced by FAO, the International Land Coalition (ILC) and the French agricultural research and cooperation organization, CIRAD.

“Land insecurity is one of the most damaging forms of inequality, paid for in lower productivity, weaker resilience, and poorer nutrition. Secure land tenure enables sustainable investment and is the difference between short-term survival and long-term food security.” said FAO Chief Economist Maximo Torero Cullen.

High-level delegates from FAO headquarters and regional offices visit Joint FAO/IAEA Centre

For the first time, FAO Assistant Directors-General and Regional Representatives from all five regions, along with Directors of technical divisions from headquarters (HQ), met at the Joint FAO/IAEA Centre in Vienna in February to develop a joint action plan to scale up nuclear and related technologies through a unified “One FAO Approach.”

Their presence signalled a commitment to deepen the collaboration with the Joint FAO/IAEA Centre at a moment when countries confront rising food insecurity, climate-driven shocks, and growing demands on agrifood systems, and urgently need more integrated, science-driven solutions.

“For more than sixty years, the Joint FAO/IAEA Centre has shown what is possible when FAO and the IAEA combine their strengths in service of a shared mission,” said QU Dongyu, FAO Director-General. “Harnessing the full potential of our laboratory networks and technical tools allows us to better integrate nuclear techniques into FAO-led programmes and projects, amplifying their reach and effectiveness”.

WFP

Lubna Alaman

Cindy McCain, Executive Director of the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), has announced that she will step down from her role at the end of May

2026 to focus on health issues. McCain, who suffered a mild stroke in October 2025, returned to her post in early January but found the demands of the job were outpacing her recovery. “I had truly hoped I could finish out my term, but my health has not recovered to a level that allows me to fully serve the enormous demands of this job. This is one of the most difficult decisions I have ever had to make. To our donors, partners and our global WFP team: thank you for everything you have done and continue to do. I will remain WFP’s biggest champion and continue to be an unwavering voice for those struggling with hunger everywhere”. McCain had assumed the role of WFP ED on 5 April 2023. Until the post of ED is filled, WFP Deputy Executive Director, Carl Skau, will be Officer-in-Charge, AFP.

Matthew Hollingworth has been appointed Assistant Executive Director Programme Operations effective 1 January 2026. He will lead WFP’s work in assessment, analysis, programme policy design, and supply chain to ensure WFP delivers on its mandate of saving lives and changing lives. Mr. Hollingworth joined WFP in 2001. Prior to his current appointment, he served as WFP’s Country Director in Lebanon, overseeing large-scale food and cash assistance programmes for displaced communities and refugees. Mr. Hollingworth has led operations in the State of Palestine, Ukraine, South Sudan, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic and Afghanistan and developed extensive expertise in crisis coordination, social protection systems and resilience programming. A dual national of the United Kingdom and Ireland, Mr. Hollingworth holds a Master’s degree in supply chain management; a Postgraduate diploma in humanitarian relief and a Bachelor’s degree in philosophy and politics. He is married with three children.

On 20 February 2026, WFP warned of catastrophic shortfalls in Somalia with

millions at risk of deepening hunger crisis. WFP sounded the alarm that its life-saving emergency food and nutrition assistance in Somalia is at imminent risk of grinding to a halt without new immediate funding commitments. The organization’s resources are expected to be depleted within weeks without urgent replenishment.

On 15 January 2026, WFP stated that families in Sudan have been pushed to the brink amidst brutal conflict and famine as WFP resources dry up. As Sudan marks more than 1,000 days of brutal conflict this month, what has become the world’s largest hunger and displacement crisis shows no signs of abating. This comes as WFP is struggling to keep life-saving emergency operations running. Over the past six months, nearly 1.8 million people - in famine or risk of famine areas - have received regular monthly WFP assistance helping to push back hunger in nine locations.

However, current forecasts put WFP’s funding at just under half of the required US\$ 13 billion budget to reach 110 million of the world’s most vulnerable. As a result, millions of people may be cut off from vital assistance, threatening lives and the stability of regions.

IFAD

Sino Tesfamariam

49th IFAD Governing Council

The 49th IFAD Governing Council (GC49) was held on 10-11 February 2026 at IFAD Headquarters in Rome, Italy. It was attended by most of IFAD’s 180 member states, development partners, and youth representatives.

The 49th IFAD Governing Council focused on empowering rural youth and women as key drivers of global food security and rural development. Under the theme “From Farm to Market: Investing with Young Entrepreneurs,” member states emphasized the need to expand

opportunities for young people in agrifood systems, strengthen rural economies, and build resilience amid global instability.

The session also marked the launch of the International Year of the Woman Farmer, highlighting women's essential contributions to food production and rural livelihoods. Discussions underscored the importance of partnerships, investment, and inclusive policies—particularly around remittances—to support rural communities and accelerate progress toward sustainable developments.

The 50th IFAD Governing Council (GC50) is scheduled to be held on 2–3 February 2027 in Rome. The year 2027 is a special major institutional milestone for IFAD because it represents five decades of global leadership in rural development and poverty reduction.

Ms Monica MASOTTI, WFP
 Ms Alison Victoria MOORE, FAO
 Mr Patrick Xavier MULLEN, WFP
 Mr Bruce MURPHY, IFAD
 Mr Bishow PARAJULI, WFP
 Mr Salvatore PERITORE, IFAD
 Ms Brenda May PHILLIPS, WFP
 Ms Jeannette SHALABI, ITC/ILO
 Ms Margherita SINI, FAO
 Ms Elisabetta VACCARI, IFAD
 Ms Patricia G. VIZCARRA FOSTER, WFP



In Memoriam

Membership Matters



A hearty welcome to our members who have recently joined the FFOA:

Mr Massimo ALBANESI, FAO
 Mr Luca ALINOVI, FAO
 Ms Serena BALDELLI, WFP
 Ms Susan BELLO PUGLIESE, FAO
 Ms Susan BOUNFORD, WFP
 Ms Cristina Maria CONRADO VEIGA, FAO
 Ms Jacqueline DALDIN, UNFPA
 Mr Hakan FALKELL, WFP
 Mr Damiano GENOVESE, WFP
 Mr Adam GERRAND, FAO
 Mr James HEER, IFAD
 Ms Angela HINRICHS, FAO
 Ms Martina HUONDER, IFAD
 Mr Claude JOLY, FAO
 Mr Audun LEM, FAO
 Ms Noushaz MAHINI, WFP

On Behalf of all the members of the FFOA, we express heartfelt sympathy to the families and friends of all those members who have left us.

Ms Valeria ALBERTI, FAO
 24/09/2025
 Mr Om Parkash ARORA, WFP
 30/03/2025
 Ms Bridget BARKER – ARMUZZI, FAO
 14/07/2025
 Mr Bruno BASILI, FAO
 28/10/2024
 Mr Alberto BENEDETTI, FAO
 02/05/2025
 Mr Peter J. BOEKSTEGEN, FAO
 11/05/2025
 Ms Wilhelmina BREUKELMAN, FAO
 09/11/2025
 Ms Serena BRUCHER, FAO
 19/07/2025
 Mr Claus BUDTZ, WFP
 20/12/2024
 Mr Walter BURGOS LEON, FAO
 05/08/2025
 Ms Kathleen CHACHO-WOODS, FAO
 08/02/2026

Mr Pierre CHARRANSOL, FAO
25/09/2024

Ms Yvonne CHAZINE, FAO
22/10/2024

Mr Nestore CRISTOFARO, FAO
30/11/2025

Ms Pamela CROSS, FAO
07/01/2025

Mr Laszlo DE BETHLEN, FAO
02/01/2025

Mr Andre DE VALCK, FAO
04/01/2025

Ms Ailbe Brigid DILLON-BERNARDIS, FAO
27/01/2026

Ms Elvise FALLOCCO FATTORINI, FAO
28/10/2024

Ms Margaret GARNER, FAO
15/01/2025

Ms Barbara GIRARD, FAO
14/02/2025

Mr Heinrich Karl HOFFMANN, FAO
11/04/2025

Mr Abdel Razek IBRAHIM, FAO
08/02/2025

Mr Egidio INTOTERO, FAO
17/08/2025

Mr Virgilio B. MANNARELLI, FAO
31/12/2024

Ms Doris D. MATTRAVERS-MESSANA, FAO
10/01/2025

Ms Fulvia MOMBELLI, FAO
24/12/2024

Ms Nawal MUAMMAR, FAO
25/08/2025

Mr FRANCO ODDONE, FAO
27/12/2024

Mr Giuseppe PIRAS, FAO
04/01/2025

Ms Kiran PRASAD, FAO
22/11/2024

Mr ATIQR RAHMAN, IFAD
25/02/2026

Mr Fabian RECALDE, FAO
01/01/2025

Mr Douglas SMITH, FAO
16/04/2025

Mr William M. SOLAR, FAO
06/02/2025

Ms Maria STRAUSS-RAHAL, FAO
14/12/2024

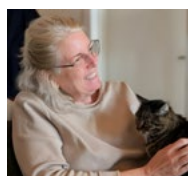
Ms Anne STUNT-GOBBI, FAO
21/10/2024

Ms Marguerite WALTER, FAO
04/01/2025

Ms JAMIE WATTS, WFP
08/12/2025

Mr Krzysztof Jan WOJCIECHOWSKI, FAO
25/03/2025

OBITUARY - Jamie Watts (1957 - 2025)



Former WFP colleague Jamie Watts, 68, passed away on 8 December 2025 in Penna in Teverina, Umbria

Jamie worked with WFP from 2010 to 2020 in Rome, Dakar and Nigeria, serving as Senior Evaluation Officer, Senior Compliance and Risk Advisor, and Deputy Country Director. She was admired for her intellect, integrity and commitment to excellence - qualities she brought to every aspect of her work. Before joining WFP, she served with Bioversity International, the Peace Corps and the US Forest Service. She held degrees from Colorado State University and St. John's University.

Born on 12 August 1957 in the United States, Jamie grew up moving often, developing the adaptability and curiosity that shaped her life. She began her career as a forest ranger in western US and later worked in Washington, DC, where her son Joshua was born. She moved to Rome in the 1990s, and the city remained one of her true homes; she built lasting friendships there and maintained close ties long after retiring.

Jamie approached life with energy, precision and exceptionally high standards. She lived fully - embracing adventure, art, and even taking on major projects for

friends. She was a generous, warm and forgiving friend whose encouragement and strength inspired many.

After retiring in 2020 and becoming an Italian citizen, Jamie devoted herself to designing and building an eco-friendly home overlooking the Teverina valley. True to her methodical nature, she oversaw every detail carefully. She planted olive trees and gardens, explored the hills as an avid hiker, and immersed herself in the landscape she loved. Although she lived in Penna for a short time, she formed many close friendships and became a valued member of the community.

Jamie continued to pursue her passions - creative writing, choral singing, beekeeping, birdwatching, travel - and remained an active member of a serious book club, where her thoughtful insights and excellent cooking were deeply appreciated.

She is survived by her son, Joshua, of San Francisco, CA, and her brothers, Tom and Ray. Memorial services for Jamie were held in Penna in Teverina and in Rome.

We extend our heartfelt condolences to her family, friends, and the many colleagues who were fortunate to know her.

OBITUARY - George F. Saddler

1925 - 2026



It is with sadness that we announce the passing of George F. Saddler, the 2nd President of the Federation of Associations of Former International Civil Servants (FAFICS) which he served with conviction, excellence and committed leadership from 1999-2004.

After retiring from the US foreign service, and UNESCO, he was asked by several AFICS/NY friends and former UN colleagues to join AFICS/NY and shortly

after, he was appointed the Secretary by its then President, Freddie Freidgut. Then he was elected President where he met Aamir Ali, the FAFICS President during a FAFICS session in New York. When Aamir Ali stepped down, he was asked to be a candidate as his successor to the FAFICS Presidency, for which he was acclaimed without any competition or opposition.

On the occasion of his 100th birthday in a message to UN retirees around the world, he said, "It is an honour and privilege to have worked in the UN System, and we should all feel blessed to have the experience of being an International Civil Servant. In my opinion, if FAFICS did not exist, it would certainly have to be created because its importance is beyond question."

We extend our condolences to the Saddler family on behalf of the FAFICS community.

Social Support and Recreational Activities

RECENT ACTIVITIES

December 2025

Trip to Budapest – Christmas Markets
Trip to Alsazia, Colmar, Strasburgo and Riquewihl – Mercatini di Natale
Trip to Pienza and Montepulciano – Mercatini di Natale
Year-end Trip to Salento – Puglia

February 2026

Tour to Marrakesh and Ait Ben Haddou
Tour to Japan
Porta Portese Theatre "Beyond the Party", Luigi Criscuolo
Theatre in English "God of Carnage"

March 2026

One day in Firenze
Impressionism – Museo Ara Pacis
Trip to Caserta Vecchia e San Leucio"
Guided visits organized by British Ex-pats Association

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

April 2026

Trip to Modena, Borghi and Castelli dell'Emilia, Bologna and the Rocca di San Leo

Tour to Gdansk (Poland)

June 2026

Tour to Mesopotamia

Tour to the Baltic Capitals

Cruising on the Reine



Last November I participated in a cruise, after long pondering about it because I didn't like the idea of finding myself amidst a noisy multitude of thousands, stranded in a skyscraper euphemistically called "ship". Yet, the itinerary was interesting and the perspective of sights promised a novelty. Well, I was never happier to be proven wrong and can safely declare this was one of the most enjoyable trips I've ever undertaken.

The ship was a beautifully small one, a mere 160-passengers at its maximum capacity and, happily, carrying only 106 of us on this particular trip. It was very comfortable, elegantly decked for the imminent Christmas festivities, with first class service guaranteed by very professional and yet friendly staff. Lovely food and quality entertainment completed the very pleasant and smooth river navigation.

From Amsterdam to Basel, the itinerary proved a success too, with many interesting sights and visits.

Cosmopolitan Amsterdam, where I had stayed many times before, was as usual welcoming and pleasant to roam around, with its canals and old gable houses.

Strasbourg was particularly vibrant and beautiful in its Christmas version, with little Xmas markets scattered all over the city centre and rich decorations above and along its old streets. We visited the splendid gothic Cathedral and strolled along the hundreds of timbered houses that form the city centre. Everything was immersed in a festive atmosphere that put a smile on all of us. We passed several river locks and looking at the crew deftly manoeuvring was fascinating and a tribute to human ingenuity.

The little town of Rüdesheim offered us a real treasure: the Siegfried's Mechanical Museum, where we enjoyed the lively presentation of a unique collection of organs and other mechanical instruments, spanning over two centuries. The 15th



century Brömserhof building that houses the museum was stunning too, an added bonus.

We marvelled at Cologne's spectacular gothic Cathedral and rejoiced wandering among the stands of the local Christmas market, full of colours, lights, music and hot chocolate! Heidelberg enchanted us with its extraordinary load of history crystallized in its buildings and monuments.

Centuries-old castles proudly stood along the river banks, holding guard between little villages, all to be admired from our ship's top deck during navigation while sipping hot mulled wine considerably served to us, chilled passengers, by the crew.

Could we ever travel through the Rhineland vineyards without paying homage to the fruitful endeavours of skilled wine growers? Of course not! We had several wine tastings, joyful and much appreciated treats.

Finally, we reached Basel, the end of our fascinating cruise, and rejoiced at the opportunity of visiting nearby Lucerne, charming and quaint.

Contrary to so many doubts before departure, I was sorry to disembark, therefore... till the next river cruise!

Manuela Lombardi

The wonders of Uzbekistan



When the FFAO trip to Uzbekistan organized by Laura Maioli came across our radar this past spring, our interest was immediately piqued. For a self-confessed textile fanatic such as I, Laura's thoughtfully planned itinerary offered a golden opportunity to explore the country's rich cultural and material heritage. Having never opted in to an organized tour, we were a little wary of what a fixed Itinerary with an unknown group would look like. However, Uzbekistan was far enough off our usual travel grid that we would not have been comfortable organizing such a trip on our own, so with plenty of excitement and a little trepidation, we launched ourselves towards this compelling mirage on the horizon.

The excellent program, well-organized logistics, and Laura's caring and patient leadership on this non-stop yet sustainably paced trip - even a transport glitch in the desert was handled with speed and aplomb - made for a bountiful and seamless adventure. To say we were in another dimension feels superlative as a description, but I can assure you that the intriguing landscape, the rich dynastic past of Uzbekistan's fabled leaders and the truly mesmerizing monuments that dotted the horizon, were all brought to life by our local guide Islam, who took us on a magic ride through history that we are still processing!

We visited the mythical Samarkand (UNESCO) with the splendid mosque of the Registan; Bukhara (UNESCO); the city-museum of Khiva (UNESCO), the suggestive earthwork ruins of the fortress of the ancient Corasmia, and finally Nurata, an oasis in the Kizilkum desert and the lake of Aydarkul.

Along the way, silk, cotton and camel hair, embroidered and quilted, were common threads. We stroked, clutched, hackled, and fell in love with these



materials at every stop. Leaving a trail of happy merchants in our wake, Islam never lost his patience with our frenzied search for the perfect mementos amongst the vast array of beautiful Uzbeki artisanal art. Spiritual moments also found their way into our hearts, the monumental beauty surrounding us testament to true faith.

Upon departure, our local guide shared with us an adage; you take every trip three times: once in anticipation,

second the trip itself, and once again through your memories. We have enough memories and mementos to relive our adventure again and again, and I imagine that I speak for all of us in saying that we look forward to another one day soon with this welcoming and friendly crew! Not even the discomfort of sleeping in yurts dimmed our enthusiasm - there was a lot of friendship and laughter, and only enough complaints to make us true comrades.

Thank you, Laura and fellow travelers, for making this mirage a real oasis!

Sara Jane Leone

NEWSBRIEF 128

March 2026

Newsbrief, the FFOA official edition, is produced in English and Italian three times a year and is distributed electronically to those who have internet access, and in print to those who do not. Newsbrief (current and back issues) is also available on the FFOA website: www.ffoa-web.org.

Editor: Stephen Dembner

Italian translation/Editing: Maria Gattone, Giuliano Pucci

Distribution/WEB: Gabriella Sborchia

About FFOA

Since 1971, FFOA has worked to advance the interests of pensioners from United Nations Agencies based in Italy, regardless of where they spend their retirement. FFOA is based at FAO Headquarters in Rome and has a growing global membership numbering more than 2,300 pensioners from FAO, IFAD, WFP, ICCROM, etc. from all staff categories.

Representation

FFOA officially represents retiree interests in formal relations with management of FAO, IFAD and WFP. We have a place at the table in all retiree-relevant discussions. FFOA is also active in the Federation of Associations of Former International Civil Servants (FAFICS), which joins 63 associations like ours to represent pensioners at the UN System level.

Support

FFOA works to improve retirement benefits – particularly pensions and medical insurance – and to protect the interests of the membership as a whole. We also respond to individual requests from members for assistance, guidance or referral on issues associated with retirement and ageing in general (all services are provided by members on a voluntary basis). Members are informed of developments in areas of concern by our Newsbrief, by our website and direct contact by post (including e-mail).

Camaraderie

FFOA promotes contact and social and intellectual exchange among its members, through a web-based discussion forum, and a wide range of cultural and social activities. Colleagues and friends in the Rome area gather at FAO on the first Wednesday of each month for “Coffee Morning” – drop in if you’re in the neighbourhood!

Helping those in need

Being a pensioner can be difficult and lonely. Volunteers from FFOA are available to support members in distress over the phone, or to organize home visits. FFOA also offers small no-interest loans (maximum 1,500 Euro) to meet short-term emergency requirements.

Service

Even after a career of service, UN pensioners remain interested in and committed to development issues, and continue to support the objectives of their former employer. FFOA attends key meetings and events at Rome headquarters, shares updates with members on key activities and achievements in the UN System, and provides direct support as well.

Keep up with FFOA and retiree colleagues

Stay informed on the latest developments on important issues for retirees via the FFOA website: www.ffoa-web.org. Register on the website to ensure you always receive the latest information, and stay in touch with distant friends and former colleagues.

Join FFOA!

Adding your voice helps make the Association stronger and more impactful. Annual FFOA membership is 25 Euro; a life membership is 375 Euro. There is one-time registration fee of 10 Euro. Follow the link to download a membership application: www.ffoa-web.org/eligibility-for-membership, write to ffoa@fao.org, or phone the FFOA desk at (+39) 06-5705 5623 / 5705 6016.