



**AFUNO - NZ**



ASSOCIATION OF FORMER UNITED NATIONS OFFICIALS | NEW ZEALAND

# Newsletter 2020/3

**December 2020**

## Message from the President

Dear AFUNO Friends

I was delighted that so many UN Retirees were able to get together to celebrate the UN turning 75 in Oct/Nov. UN@75 AFUNO events were held in Christchurch, Nelson, Wellington and Auckland.

Hosted by the Speaker the Hon Trevor Mallard and the UN Association NZ, a few of us were able to take the opportunity to attend the UN Day reception at Parliament House to mark the 75th anniversary of the UN. The event, which reflected on the future of multilateralism through a diverse range of perspectives from the Diplomatic, Academic, UN and Youth communities, was preceded by a book launch of *A Seat at the Table: New Zealand and the UN Security Council 2015-2016*. Tania McBride, who recently returned to NZ from heading the UNICEF Gaziantep office in Turkey for the Syria crisis, has kindly written a review of *A Seat at the Table* which you'll find below.



*AFUNO members at the 29<sup>th</sup> October Parliament Reception to Mark UN Day 2020 and 75 Years of the UN.*

*From left to right:*

- Doug Higgins*
- Urmila Singh*
- Prakash Singh*
- Gillian Mellsop*
- Susan Curran*
- Edna Tait*
- Gary Dennison*
- Janet Chang*
- Kaison Chang*
- Tania McBride*

On a sad note, two of our members Betty Milliken and Carol Redford recently passed away. Betty's son shared eulogies to his Mother and Father Morris Redford (FAO) which are summarised, while Julie Hilton has written a piece to commemorate Carol and her husband Russell (UNON, ESCAP, UNDSS).

Along with IRD and UN Pension fund updates, the newsletter also contains a summary of key issues from the three-day early morning/late night virtual annual FAFICS Council meeting, at which the AFUNO Secretary Doug, Treasurer Andrew Bruce and I represented AFUNO-NZ. Alison Small, a recent FAO retiree, has contributed an interesting article on UN Summits and how the landscape in this regard has radically changed. Dr Teariki

Matairangi Purea (FAO) was recently awarded an Officer of the Order of the British Empire by the Cook Islands Government for his services to the community, Public Service and the Pacific region. A summary of Dr Purea's career from the *Cook Islands News* is included in the newsletter. We send AFUNO's warm congratulations to Dr Mat, as he is affectionately known.

In conclusion AFUNO is most grateful to our Regional Coordinators for arranging get-togethers which provide an opportunity to meet fellow UN Retirees and enjoy speaking a similar language, where we are mostly able to understand each other's acronyms! We are delighted that Urmila Singh (UNFPA) has kindly agreed to become the Wellington Coordinator with much appreciated support from Dorothy Matheson who previously managed this role. Doug Higgins (AFUNO Secretary) initiated a Nelson group, while Susan Curran (OHCHR, UNICEF) has kindly agreed to coordinate a Central Otago group and Angela Kearney (UNICEF) is supporting Pauline MacKay (WHO) with Christchurch/Canterbury get-togethers.

May I send you all every best wish for the Festive Season and leave you with a short clip produced by the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs that records key events from the UN's history and ideas for its future.

Gillian

<http://webtv.un.org/watch/the-un-innovating-for-peace/6176135142001/>



## Tributes to Members Past

**Morris and Betty Milliken.** Reflections from their son Tom Milliken.

Morris, (often known as Monty) had a remarkably busy international working life. He gained a degree in agricultural economics at Massey Agricultural College then gained a First-Class Honours Degree in agricultural science from the (then) University of New Zealand. This knowledge complemented the many skills he developed. They included teaching and lecturing, using his knowledge as an agricultural economist and as a statistician, writing and preparing projects and reports and working closely with governments and appropriate bureaucracies. He was especially busy in parts of Africa but also worked in the Caribbean and England. He, and his English wife Betty, retired to his birth country of New Zealand from where he carried out consultancies in Africa, Yemen and FAO headquarters for another six years.

Morris began his work for the United Nations in 1962 in New York where he was a statistician for the Statistical Office. After two and a half years he and Betty planned to return to New Zealand but an offer from the Mauritius Agricultural Marketing Board meant they moved there instead, and Morris continued his work as a statistician. It was here, two years later that Morris joined the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO). He worked as an agricultural economist for the Mauritius Ministry of Agriculture. His next FAO post was for four years in Tanzania as a Planning Coordinator in the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources. His last posting, of five years was in Ghana where he worked on projects and their planning in the Ministry of Agriculture and later the Ministry of Economic Affairs. Throughout his career, Monty was a close observer of the contexts and systems in which people lived and in which his projects operated. During his time in Ghana, he became aware of a famine situation in northern Ghana, which had not been formally acknowledged. Monty visited each of the diplomatic missions to request urgent food aid, and it's more than possible that his personal intervention saved tens of thousands of lives.

Morris enjoyed FAO work and with Betty as support he also enjoyed the necessary visits to FAO Headquarters in Rome. Betty had a Master of Arts in Geography from Cambridge University and was competent as a shorthand typist. Against her father's advice, she had accepted a position as Secretary to the Deans of the Faculties of Arts and Sciences at Ibadan University in Nigeria and while working in Nigeria she met and married Morris. Together they raised their three children, educating them in England, and shared travels in many parts of the world. Betty's knowledge and skills enabled her to follow Morris's career and her support contributed greatly to his successes. In retirement in New Zealand, they enjoyed gardening and Morris developed an interest in genealogy. Morris died in 2017 and Betty in 2020.

**Carol and Russell Radford.** Reflections from Julie Hilton, former staff member at the UN Secretariat, UNFICYP, and ESCAP.

This is to commemorate Carol and Russel Radford, who passed away in August this year and in 2017 respectively. Both born in Rhodesia where Carol and Rus met, Rus spent time in the Rhodesian Army, before joining the Australia Army in time to be drafted for Vietnam. Unenamoured with that army, he moved to NZ and joined the NZ Army, and was once again sent to Vietnam but was happy with the NZ Army. On return, Carol and Rus embraced New Zealand as their home country, especially as Rus's parents, who had had to flee Rhodesia (due to their political views opposing Ian Smith being known), had also emigrated to Upper Hutt. Rus stayed on in the NZRMP Corps until around 1994, when Rus joined the UN, working for UNPROFOR (in the former Yugoslavia) to work as an Investigator in the Security Section. In 1996 he joined the Security Investigation Unit (SIU), and later became Chief of SIU. When UNPROFOR was broken into three separate missions, Rus opted for UNTAES in Vukovar. In 1998, Rus joined UNON in Kenya and eventually became Deputy, Security Services Section. From Nairobi, Rus moved to the role of Security Advisor (SA) for the Philippines in 2003 and in 2005 moved to Bangkok as Chief, Security & Safety Section in ESCAP from where he retired. Post retirement, Rus was seconded to New York to write the Security Investigation Manual and Training for DHSSS until he finally re-retired and returned to Wellington in 2011.

Russel was very highly regarded in his field for his Security Investigation and MOSS (Minimum Operating Security Standards) Assessment work. But more than high regard, he was widely appreciated for his fairness and for the ease of working with him and for him. Accompanying Rus to the UN family missions, Carol was equally well regarded, always very loyal to her husband and family. People who knew her, knew her softly spoken wisdom. I speak for so many when I say, it was a pleasure to have known them both. RIP Carol and Rus.

## Contributions from Our Members

**UN Summits and How the Landscape Has Radically Changed** by Alison Small. Alison is a journalist, editor and former Information Officer for FAO, with assignments at IFAD, ICCROM (The International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property-UNESCO) and UNFICYP.



*UN Summit on Sustainable Development, 2015*

Anyone who has worked on communications or outreach in the UN system, will read the words United Nations Summit with a certain dread. During the 1990s and 2000s, the UN system calendar, already packed with conferences, seminars, workshops, regularly scheduled and ad hoc committee meetings, took awareness-raising to ambitious levels with a wave of UN Summits. These hugely costly, organizationally challenging meetings were conceived around everything including poverty; women; climate change; hunger; nutrition, and the SDGs, among others. Not content with a first go-round, some went on to hold the original Summit plus five or even 25 years later eg. Beijing +5 and +25 (mainly a virtual event held in the context of the General Assembly in October 2020).



Having worked for the Secretariat of the World Food Summit (WFS) for two years prior to the WFS in 1996 and then again for the WFS five years later, we always joked that you had to begin taking your vitamins at least 12 months ahead of the event.

WFS took place at FAO headquarters in Rome and involved around 10 000 people, including over 100 Heads of State and Government, some 2000 print, radio and TV journalists and an ambitious set of 15 technical background documents (read: books!) to say nothing of the fraught process of negotiations to arrive at a Rome Declaration on World Food Security and its companion document the World Food Summit Plan of Action.

The rise and fall of the Summit, pretty much follows the world's fortunes, literally. Governments, and even the private sector, made contributions either in-kind, directly or indirectly. However, with the financial crisis of 2008-2009, donors questioned the value-added in such meetings, especially given that progress toward goals and Plans of Action had been almost universally disappointing. On a global level, funding for multilateral organizations generally is precarious but the death knell is almost certainly going to be Covid. Without travel, budgets or concrete achievements to date, the era of the mega Summit is likely over. The one exception may be climate change and just possibly, if one had to guess, something on "Disease and Pandemics" but in general, like everything else, building consensus through mega meetings is costly, rarely legally binding, and simply not practical even with a Covid vaccine. As for virtual meetings, they just don't have the buzz or the cache.



**Book Review: *A Seat at the Table*.** A review by Tania McBride, former Chief of Field Office, UNICEF Gazientep, Turkey, for the Syria crisis.

Hassall, G., & Partow, N. (Eds.) (2020). *A Seat at the Table: New Zealand and the United Nations Security Council 2015–2016*. Massey University Press.

*A Seat at the table* is a fascinating read for all those interested in geopolitics and New Zealand's fourth term as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council during 2015 – 2016.

The "table" is the United Nations Security Council, which consists of 14 members, 10 of which are elected (the "E10") by the UN General Assembly, and 5 of whom are permanent (the "P5"). A seat at the table details the rationale for why a small liberal democracy like New Zealand would seek a fourth term on the UNSC which requires significant resourcing to campaign and once selected requires meaningful participation. This question and the campaign for a seat at the table is detailed in the first part of the book with excellent chapters written by key players in the campaign who describe the unique way New Zealand approached the campaign and our subsequent tenure on the council. The chapter by Simon Draper is compelling as he shares the unique way the New Zealand diplomatic community both at capital and across the globe, mobilized as one team and with the premise of WYSIWYG (What you see is what you get). It was a campaign which Draper mentions was an opportunity to learn more about the other 192 UN member states which, win or lose, would contribute to New Zealand's foreign policy knowledge and skills.

A compelling section of the book is the work that New Zealand was involved in during its tenure on the UNSC. Colin Keating discussed in chapter 6 the "Big Issues of our Time: Syria and the Middle East". Prior to 2011, conflicts in Africa had dominated the UNSC's agenda. However, in this chapter, Keating details how the Middle East region would require more meaningful focus due to the interrelated strands of conflict, regional politics, and major interests.

The final section is a fascinating series of 9 case studies specifying New Zealand’s work and voice on the UNSC. New Zealand’s role advocating for Small Islands Developing States (SIDS) is worth reading to understand how New Zealand was able to deliver on its commitment to host the first ever Security Council debate on Peace and Security challenges facing SIDS and the role the Council and the UN system could play in helping to address non-traditional threats to peace such as climate change.

A Seat at the Table is an excellent read and one that the reader can dip in and out of at leisure. It highlights the importance of New Zealand’s role as an active participant in upholding international law and advocating as the voice for small states, as well as seeking to become the “voice for reliable and constructive international citizenship”.

### **Cook Islands News Features Dr Teariki Matairangi Porea OBE**



In the Queen’s Honours list earlier this year, four Cook Islanders were recognized for their services to their communities and their country. One of these was AFUNO member Dr Teariki Matairangi Porea OBE.

Dr Porea, affectionately known as Dr Mat, was born in the Cook Islands, and worked for the UN Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) from 1995 to 2011. His special skills covered many aspects of agriculture and horticulture, including pest control and best husbandry management. During his time with FAO, Dr Porea’s work covered 24 countries in the Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia regions and focussed mainly on plant production, plant protection and capacity development. His support enabled national agricultural institutions to deliver on their five-year priorities. Dr Mat was instrumental in re-establishing the floriculture industry in the Pacific region and he also led important efforts for agriculture production on atoll islands with limited soils.

Before his time with the FAO, Dr Porea worked in the Cook Islands promoting the agriculture industry, bio-protection of borders and pre- and post-harvest treatment programmes especially for export of bananas and oranges to New Zealand. He became Director of the Totokoitu Research Station in 1980 and his work won special recognition with New Zealand’s Department of Scientific and Industrial Research in the 1980s. After FAO, he became Head of Cook Islands’ Ministry of Agriculture where his work inspired many young agriculture enthusiasts.

Dr Porea’s work was informed by academic study provided by well-earned scholarships. He attended Avele College in Samoa, the University of the South Pacific School of Agriculture in Samoa (for a Diploma in Tropical Agriculture), Gatton University in Australia (for a Diploma in Applied Science in Horticulture and a Bachelor of Applied Science in Horticulture and Plant Protection) and the University of Sydney (for a Doctorate in Agronomy Agriculture). He was considered a ‘living encyclopaedia’ and one of the leading soil scientists in the Pacific. Dr Porea is a dedicated husband to his wife and greatest companion, Theresa, whom he met in Samoa and a caring father to their four boys.

A full account of Dr Porea’s work can be found in *Cook Islands News* Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> October 2020:

<https://www.cookislandsnews.com/weekend/queen-s-honour-for-tireless-service-to-their-communities/>



## UNJSPF Annual Meeting, July 2020

The annual meeting of the UN Pension Board was held late in July. Its report for the UN General Assembly covered six items and confirmed the UNJSPF's good financial health.

1. **Business Continuity.** Despite the Covid-19 situation, payment of pensions to established and new retirees has continued well. A digital certificate of entitlement has been designed with, so far, WFP and FAO successful testers.
2. **2021 Administrative Budget.** For General Assembly approval, the proposed budget includes plans to simplify client experience, modernise pension services and build a data-driven organisation. The proposed transfer of financial functions from Geneva to New York is paused and further information is requested for the next Board session.
3. **Fully Funded Pension Fund.** The Board noted that the biennial actuarial valuation showed the current contribution rate is sufficient to meet the Fund's needs and provides a small surplus.
4. **Investment Performance.** The asset value of the fund in 2019 had increased from \$61 billion to \$72 billion and 2020 had stayed sound. Investment performance is now published weekly and monthly on the UNJSPF website.
5. **Financial Statements Approved.** The 2019 financial statements, audited by the UN Board of Auditors (BoA), were approved and the Pension Board noted that the BoA gave an unqualified opinion that participants, retirees and beneficiaries could have full confidence in the Fund's accounts.
6. **Governance.** The UN General Assembly requested last year a review of the Fund's governance by an independent entity. Its report proposals, and consultations with all constituent groups, will be reviewed at a special meeting of the Board early in 2021. As well, the Board reviewed its Regulations and adopted a Code of Conduct for members of the Board.

The Board's full press release can be found here: <https://www.unjspf.org/67th-un-pension-board-session-concludes-confirming-the-unjspfs-good-financial-health/>

## FAFICS 49th Council, 7th-9th December 2020

### Federation of Former International Civil Servants

If there have been positive sides to the Covid-19 era, being forced into new and effective ways of doing business might be one of them. This was the first virtual FAFICS Council meeting and the format was remarkably successful. The reluctance by the Bureau to apply technology was allayed. Almost a hundred participants from member Associations around the globe were online and able to participate. Prior to the call to order, there was the typical UN meeting buzz with greetings in multiple languages as the video images popped up on screen. The timing was arranged to suit the majority: early morning for the Americas, mid-day/early afternoon for Europe and Africa, and evening for Eastern Asia. New Zealand got the short straw at 2am-5am and we were a day ahead. By the end of the Council, there was consensus to integrate virtual meetings into routine FAFICS forums in the future.

Much of the formal proceedings were administrative or on topics that were not immediately relevant to our situation in New Zealand. A few key highlights included:

**Election of Officers.** Continuing in their current position: Marco Breschi, President; Pierre Sayour, Secretary; Wolfgang Milzow, Treasurer; Odette Foudral, Vice President. The new Vice Presidents are: Deborah Landey, USA; Carlos Santos, Panama; Werner Blenk, Austria; and Makane Faye, Senegal. While the Bureau has increasingly co-opted special advisors in recent years, the Council clarified that any associated costs are not to be covered by the FAFICS budget.

**Pension Board Representation.** As indicated in the UNJSPF article above, the governance of the Fund is under review. A proposal under consideration is to reduce the Board membership by half. FAFICS representation would be reduced accordingly but may be amended to have voting rights which is currently not the case. The Bureau will continue to engage with the process to ensure that Fund beneficiaries are best represented in Board deliberations. The outcome of how FAFICS is represented is expected in the first quarter of 2021.

**Pension Fund.** Excellent (and reassuring) presentations were made by Rosemarie McClean, Chief Executive of Pension Administration (CEPA) and Pedro Guazo, RSG for Investments. Mr Guazo was appointed Representative of the Secretary General in July 2020. Consistent with the Annual Meeting summary above, the Fund is healthy and secure.

*Please note: digital Certificates of Entitlement will be offered as an option via a mobile app in 2021. AFUNO-NZ will support members with being informed of this option and, where possible, providing assistance when requested.*

**ASHI.** Considerable discussion was given to ensuring UN retirees have access to Covid vaccinations as they become available. The concerns voiced by several delegations were a reminder of how fortunate – very fortunate – we are in New Zealand with regard to how the pandemic has been managed and to how the most vulnerable are routinely prioritised in vaccination programmes.

**Communications.** Several delegations lobbied for substantive upgrading of FAFICS communications capacities to ensure that national Associations have easy access to FAFICS repositories/resources and remain abreast of activities being done on behalf of Association members. Of particular concern are the means, technologies, channels, media, and frequency that the Bureau engages to communicate with the constituent Associations. Regretfully, it was evident that the Bureau does not grasp the distinction between communication and communications. This is likely to be an area for continued engagement to achieve improvement.

## Update on Tax Exemption of UN Pension Payments in New Zealand

Many thanks to our Honorary Legal Advisor, Anne Knowles, for this update.

AFUNO-NZ lodged our response to the IRD's Exposure draft on the Monthly Retirement Payments from the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund on 20 July 2020. It submitted that the tax exemption in the Diplomatic Privileges (UN) Order 1959 extend to monthly payments from the UNJSPF, and to lump sum payments as a withdrawal settlement amount or as commutation of the monthly payment. It argued in the alternative that if the full amount is not deemed tax-exempt then at the very least 1/3 of the monthly payments should be exempt. Following a further hiatus due to the election, the IRD's Legal Counsel requested a telephone meeting with AFUNO-NZ's barrister, Mike Lennard, which took place on 23 November 2020 to expand on our arguments concerning the 1/3 exemption. We currently await a final QWBA (Questions We Have Been Asked) Report at which time AFUNO-NZ will decide on a strategy for going forward.

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