Script 18 Non-Traditional Unions

Eligibility for UNJSPF benefits is based solely on the Fund’s Regulations, Rules and policies.

The Regulations & Rules of the UN Pension Fund recognize “partners” in some non-traditional unions and registered partnerships as “spouses” who are eligible to receive a survivor’s benefit in the case that a participant dies while in service or after he or she retires. Although the policy for recognition of non-traditional unions differs amongst the Member Organizations of the Pension Fund, the Board of the Pension Fund has adopted its own criteria to ensure that the same standards apply to all participants in the Fund equally.

What does the Fund recognize?

The Fund recognizes legal marriages, as well as certain registered partnerships or equivalent unions that are lawfully entered into and legally recognized by the competent authority of the country where the union was established.

To be recognized by the Fund, a union must have similar legal effects as marriage, specifically including pension rights. In order to recognize a union, the Fund requires documentation issued by the competent authority of the place where the union was established.

Participants should see to it that their employers send documentation about their union, to determine as early as possible if the particular union is recognized by the Fund. However, the final decision regarding the status and potential rights of the partner is taken upon the participant’s death. If a spouse is not reported to the Fund by your
employing organization prior to your separation from service, the Fund will not recognize that spouse for the purposes of paying survivor’s benefit.

After you retire, it is your responsibility to inform the Fund of any changes to your “marital” status or the death of a legally recognized partner (for more information on Marriage & Divorce see Whiteboard video 17).

The Fund keeps an updated list of “Recognized Unions” which you can consult through our Website (go to: “Learning Tools”; “Topics”; “Survivor Benefits”; and click on the Menu item “Non-Traditional Unions Annex”) and you can consult the Guidelines and related Annex that the Fund follows at the same link (“Non-Traditional Unions Guidelines”).

If you need any other information or have any questions not answered by the Website, please use the Fund’s Contact Us page on the Website.