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New security provisions at the VIC and their implications for retirees

At the annual ARICSA General Meeting in October, participants were alerted to the fact that changes to the policy governing access to the VIC were pending. In the interim, United Nations Security and Safety Service (UNSSS) and ARICSA officers have reached an agreement on the unrestricted access of retirees to the VIC; however, changes have been introduced in respect of the dependants of both active and retired staff.

Conscious of the fact that the United Nations and its staff have become a target for bomb attacks and other threats, UNSSS has implemented a new Access Control Policy in order to ensure the safety and security of all persons working at or visiting the Vienna International Centre (VIC). The new procedures came into effect on 1 January 2009.

For retirees, the new policy ensures unrestricted access to all areas of the VIC seven days a week at all hours (24/7). Access is exclusively pedestrian. The entry and exit point is Gate 1. Prior to reaching Gate 1, retirees and their spouses have to pass through a security screening process similar to that applied at airports and many other public places. The same procedure applies to the families of active staff, conference participants and consultants (to mention but a few). On reaching Gate 1, retirees pass through the same entrance as active staff, using their grounds passes to activate the entry system.

As mentioned at the ARICSA General Meeting, changes have also been introduced with respect to the spouses of retirees wishing to enter the building. The grounds passes previously issued to the spouses of retirees have been 'deactivated'; they are no longer valid and will be withdrawn. Retirees' spouses, however, may be signed in by their accompanying spouses or by an active staff member, whereupon they will be issued with a daily pass.

In certain instances, unaccompanied spouses of retirees may have to visit the VIC for different administrative formalities on behalf of the grounds pass holder (e.g. health insurance matters, pension issues or pharmacy). They should show the grounds pass of the retiree and their own personal identity document (i.e. valid passport or national identity card), following which they will receive a daily pass to enter the VIC.

UN retirees from organisations not based in Vienna and resident in Austria may request a grounds pass. This entails the completion of an application form and the presentation to the Pass Office at Gate 1 of a valid passport or national identity card, together with a copy of the quarterly statement issued by the Fund indicating that the addressee is entitled to a UN pension and has a mailing address in Austria, as well as a copy of the *Meldezettel* confirming registration as a local resident.