

FISA CHAIRPERSON'S YEAR-END MESSAGE

It is difficult to fathom, but here we are in the last month of the year. 2021 has been a most difficult year for all. Ongoing Covid concerns remain at the forefront of discussion in our media, both in South Africa and abroad. In South Africa, it does appear that our vaccination programme is up and running and is being rolled out across the country which hopefully will get us to some form of normality in the year to come. The civil unrest in July was most unfortunate and certainly set our country and economy back; the disruptions caused many businesses to close their doors permanently, The IT system of the Master's Offices was hacked, the Pretoria Deeds Office left without electricity and the Government Gazette was not able to place legal ads for weeks on end. Most of these issues have, in the meantime, been resolved.

FISA, as a non-profit organisation that represents fiduciary practitioners and sets high minimum standards for the industry, remained active as the only professional body focusing solely on fiduciary practitioners in Southern Africa.

An eventful year

We remain actively involved in various projects, such as a permanent fiduciary heritage exhibition which was officially opened on 20 March 2021 in the Old Library Museum in Graaff-Reinet during the 2021 AGM, webinars, regional meetings and then eventually closed off the year with the FISA 11th Annual Conference held at the Sandton Convention Centre on 17 November, which is known amongst practitioners, academics and the media as an event where critical issues at the intersection of practice and theory are presented by high quality speakers. Despite the damper placed on the annual FISA Conference by a threatening 4th wave of Covid-19, some 115 attendees turned up to enjoy high-value presentations by excellent guest speakers.

Mr Gordon Stuart, MD of Accuro Fiduciary in Mauritius, received the prestigious 2021 FISA Chairperson's Award at the FISA Conference.

Most regional quarterly meetings were done online, whilst a few followed the hybrid route. Attendance figures have, on average, remained constant due to the high-quality presentations, which qualify for CPD points, done by guest speakers.

FISA was admitted as *amicus curiae* (friend of the court) in the full bench hearing of the matter in which the Chief Master submitted a report under section 96(2) of the Administration of Estates Act, 66 of 1965, to the court, the hearing of which was held online on 2 and 3 November 2021. Judgement was reserved and is expected early in the first term of 2022.

Conclusion

Serving on Council is a privilege as we are the most relevant fiduciary services professional body in South Africa and we are committed to continue developing the knowledge base of all our members by offering high-level educational content that will grow each member, their respective organisations, and practices.

Our membership is growing year on year and we currently stand at well over 750 members.

Lastly, as we head into the 2022, as Chairperson of this dynamic professional body, I want to thank our Vice-Chairperson, Penny Du Plessis, our CEO, Louis van Vuren, our Secretary, Aaron Roup, and all of our fellow council and committee members for their ongoing support, guidance, enthusiasm and energy in continuing to drive FISA forward. Thanks also to Lucy Reyburn, Barbara Kerr-Shaw, and Ansie and Anchen Fouche, who continue to provide invaluable support to FISA and its Council through their effective marketing strategies.

Here's to a bright New Year, to things that are yet to come and to the memories we make and hold.

Warm regards

Ian Brink

FISA Chairperson