World Health Organization

Executive Board
160th session

Provisional agenda item 5.1 EB160/INF./1

20 November 2026

Post of Director-General

Nomination of candidates

Note by the Legal Counsel

1. This document provides background information on, and a summary of, the Executive Board's role in the nomination of candidates for the post of Director-General for consideration by the Health Assembly.

2. The legal basis for the nomination by the Board of candidates is found in Article 31 of the Constitution, which sets out the respective roles of the Executive Board and Health Assembly, and Rule 62 of the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board, which sets out the process to be followed by the Board.

Background information

3. The following documents provide background information on the process:[1]

(a) Circular Letter of 24 April 2026 from the Director-General informing Member States that they may propose persons for the post of Director-General;

(b) Article 31 of the Constitution of the World Health Organization;

(c) Rule 62 of the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board;

(d) relevant Rules of Procedure of the World Health Assembly, in particular Rules 70, 71 and 108 to 110;

(e) resolution EB120.R19 (2007), concerning the procedures for assessing whether a candidate nominated for the post of Director-General has the good physical condition required of all staff members of the Organization;

[1] See the dedicated webpage Election of the Director-General (accessed 2 November 2026).

(f) decision EB146(22) (2020), setting out the modalities for interviewing candidates and confirming the use of a paper-based secret ballot vote for nominating candidates for the post of Director-General;

(g) resolution WHA65.15 (2012), concerning the principles to which regard is to be given in the overall process of nomination, election and appointment of the Director-General, and the criteria to be applied;

(h) Code of Conduct for the election of the Director-General of the World Health Organization, as adopted by resolution WHA66.18 (2013) and amended by decision WHA73(27) (2020);

(i) resolution WHA66.18 (2013) setting out the standard form for curriculum vitae;

(j) decision EB149(4) (2021) regarding procedural clarifications related to the nomination phase; and

(k) decision EB100(7) (1997) on the implementation of Rule 52[2] of the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board: nomination for the post of Director-General.

Summary of the role of the Board

4. Member States had until 24 September 2026 to submit proposals for candidates for the post of Director-General. Proposals were to be accompanied by a curriculum vitae of no more than 3500 words in the standard form.[3] The curriculum vitae was to include an evaluation by the candidate as to how he or she meets each of the criteria for candidates approved by the Health Assembly, as well as a statement of the candidate's vision on WHO priorities and strategies. Proposals were also to include a statement to the effect that the Member State and the person(s) proposed for the post of Director-General pledged to observe the provisions of the Code of Conduct.[4]

5. The Chair of the Board, assisted by the Legal Counsel, opened the proposals received by the deadline. The proposals, curriculum vitae and supporting information were translated into all official languages and distributed to all Member States following the closure of the last regional committee meeting of the year. This information was posted on the WHO website along with the statements by which the proposing Member States and the candidate pledged to observe the provisions of the Code of Conduct.

6. At its 160th session, the Board will carry out the nomination process in four stages:

(a) initial screening of the candidates to determine whether there is a consensus that the proposed candidates meet the criteria set by the Health Assembly;

(b) shortlisting of five candidates;

(c) interview of shortlisted candidates; and

(d) voting on the candidates to be nominated.

---

[2] Rule 52 of the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board should now be read as Rule 62 of the same rules.

[3] Pursuant to resolution WHA66.18 (2013).

[4] Section B.I. of the Code of Conduct.

7. With the exception of the meeting at which the candidates for the post of Director-General are interviewed, meetings of the Board related to the nomination of the Director-General are "private meetings"; that is, they may be attended only by members of the Board, their alternates and advisers, by one representative of each Member State not represented on the Board and of each Associate Member, and by the Secretariat.[5] No official record is made of such meetings.

Initial screening

8. The initial screening will be undertaken by the Board early in the session. The first stage is for the Board to determine whether there is a consensus that the proposed candidates meet the criteria set by the Health Assembly. The Board is to carry out this task in the light of resolution WHA65.15 (2012), in which the Health Assembly decided that the Board:

> should ensure that the nominated candidates fulfil the following criteria, while underscoring the paramount importance of professional qualifications and integrity and the need to pay due regard to equitable geographical representation, as well as gender balance in the process leading to the nomination of the candidate(s) that should be submitted to the Health Assembly; he or she should have:
>
> (1) a strong technical background in a health field, including experience in public health;
>
> (2) exposure to and extensive experience in international health;
>
> (3) demonstrable leadership skills and experience;
>
> (4) excellent communication and advocacy skills;
>
> (5) demonstrable competence in organizational management;
>
> (6) sensitivity to cultural, social and political differences;
>
> (7) strong commitment to the mission and objectives of WHO;
>
> (8) good health condition required of all staff members of the Organization; and
>
> (9) sufficient skill in at least one of the official working languages of the Executive Board and the Health Assembly.

9. In respect of the criterion concerning "good health condition required of all staff members of the Organization", the candidates were requested to undergo a medical examination and to bring a completed WHO medical examination form to the attention of the Director, Staff Health and Well-being at WHO headquarters, who in turn is to report to the Chair of the Board.[6] The Chair will inform the Board accordingly.

[5] Rule 7 of the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board.

[6] See document EB120/30 and resolution EB120.R19 (2007).

Short list

10. In the event that more than five candidates are proposed, the Board is to draw up a short list of five candidates, taking account of "the paramount importance of professional qualifications and integrity and the need to pay due regard to equitable geographical representation, as well as gender balance".[7]

11. The short list will be drawn up through successive secret ballots.[8] In each ballot, members vote for the number of candidates equal to the number of places to be filled on the short list (that is, five in the first round). Ballots containing more or fewer votes than the number of places to be filled are considered invalid. The short list will be drawn up by eliminating in each round the candidate or candidates receiving the lowest number of votes, as well as any who do not receive at least a minimum proportion of the votes cast (set by the Board at 10% of the ballot papers), until there are five candidates remaining.

12. In this context, as agreed by the Executive Board through decision EB149(4) (2021), the interpretation previously applied of the term "votes cast" applies to this nomination. Accordingly, the term "votes cast" will be regarded as equivalent to "members present and voting", which refers to those members casting a valid affirmative or negative vote and does not include members abstaining from voting.[9] This is the figure the Secretariat will use when calculating the minimum proportion of votes cast for the purpose of elimination of candidates. Thus, the 10% threshold will be attained by a candidate if he or she secures three votes when the number of members present and voting is between 21 and 30 (inclusive), and four when the number of members present and voting is between 31 and 34 (inclusive).

Interviews

13. Following the shortlisting of five candidates, those candidates will be interviewed by the Executive Board "as soon as possible".[10] The date of the interviews will be fixed in consultation with the Chair. Each interview will last not more than 60 minutes and will be divided as follows: (i) an oral presentation of no more than 20 minutes on the candidate's vision for the future priorities of the Organization, with an analysis of current problems facing it and suggestions as to how those should be addressed; and (ii) a question-and-answer session of no more than 40 minutes.[11] However, if there are insufficient questions to fill the allotted time, the candidate may make additional statements until the end of the period set for the interview provided that the total time of 60 minutes is not exceeded.

Nomination

14. The Board will fix the date of the meeting at which it will nominate three persons from among the candidates on the short list.[10] In exceptional circumstances where the nomination of

[7] Rule 62, seventh paragraph, of the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board, and resolution WHA65.15 (2012), paragraph 1(f).

[8] Decision EB100(7) (1997).

[9] Rule 48 of the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board.

[10] Rule 62 of the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board.

[11] Decision EB146(22) (2020).

three candidates is not practicable, such as where there are only one or two candidates, the Board may decide to nominate fewer than three candidates.[12]

15. In accordance with Rules 56 and 62 of the Rules of Procedure of the Board, the nomination must be decided by secret ballot. Each member of the Board will be invited to choose three candidates from among the candidates appearing on the ballot paper.[13] Those candidates obtaining in the first ballot the majority required, that is a simple majority, will be elected. If the number of candidates obtaining the required majority is less than the number of places to be filled, the candidate having received the least number of votes is eliminated at each ballot. Another ballot is held between those candidates that have not received the required majority and have not been eliminated. The foregoing will be repeated until the Board has nominated three candidates. If two candidates tie for the least number of votes, a separate ballot will be held between them and the candidate receiving the least number of votes will be eliminated. The same mechanism will apply, *mutatis mutandis*, when the Board decides to nominate fewer than three candidates. Members abstaining from voting are considered as not voting[14] and are not counted for the purpose of calculating the majority.

16. It is possible for more than three candidates to secure a simple majority of the members present and voting in the first round of voting, although only three places are available for nomination. Through decision EB149(4) (2021), the Board decided to apply, should such a situation arise, the interpretation set out in the United Nations model rules, according to which those candidates, in a number not exceeding the number of places to be filled, obtaining in the first ballot a majority of the votes cast and the largest number of votes would be nominated.[15]

17. The Board will announce the name of the person or persons so nominated at a public meeting, to be convened immediately after adjournment of the private meeting, and will submit such name(s) to the Health Assembly.[13]

18. The Board will also submit to the Health Assembly a draft contract establishing the terms and conditions of appointment, salary and other emoluments attached to the office.[16] The term of office, as reflected in the duration of the contract, is fixed at five years in accordance with Rule 108 of the Rules of Procedure of the World Health Assembly. More details on the terms of the draft contract are provided in document EB160/6.

---

[12] Rule 62, eighth paragraph, of the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board.

[13] Rule 62, tenth paragraph, of the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board.

[14] In accordance with Rule 42 of the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board.

[15] See document EB139/2016/REC/1, summary records of the third meeting, section 2.

[16] Rule 112 of the Rules of Procedure of the World Health Assembly.