

Admission of new Members and Associate Members

Application for admission of the Faroe Islands to associate membership

1. This document provides background information on legal and procedural matters concerning the application for admission of the Faroe Islands to associate membership, submitted by the Government of Denmark.¹
2. As stated in Article 8 of the WHO Constitution, “Territories or groups of territories which are not responsible for the conduct of their international relations may be admitted as Associate Members by the Health Assembly upon application made on behalf of such territory or group of territories by the Member or other authority having responsibility for their international relations”. The current Associate Members of WHO are Puerto Rico and Tokelau.
3. Applications for associate membership that reach the Director-General at least 30 days prior to the opening of the Health Assembly session must be placed on the agenda of that session.² If the application for associate membership is approved by the Health Assembly, such approval must be communicated immediately to the Member that submitted the request. That Member must then give notice to the Organization of acceptance on behalf of the Associate Member of associate membership. The territory concerned becomes an Associate Member from the date on which such notice is received by WHO.³ Accordingly, should the request by Denmark for associate membership of the Faroe Islands be approved by the Seventy-fourth World Health Assembly, the Faroe Islands would become an Associate Member from the date of receipt by WHO of the notice of acceptance by Denmark of the Health Assembly’s approval.
4. In accordance with Articles 8 and 45 of the WHO Constitution, the rights and obligations of Associate Members in the Health Assembly and Executive Board as well as in the regional organizations were determined by the Health Assembly through two resolutions adopted at its first and second sessions.⁴ They are reflected in relevant provisions of the Rules of Procedure of the Health Assembly and Executive Board, as summarized below.

¹ Document A74/4.

² Rule 115 of the Rules of Procedure of the Health Assembly.

³ Rule 117 of the Rules of Procedure of the Health Assembly.

⁴ Text adopted by the First World Health Assembly on 21 July 1948 (Off. Rec. Wld Hlth Org., 13, 100, 337) and resolution WHA2.103 (1949), available in the section on rights and obligations of Associate Members and other territories in Basic documents, 49th ed. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2020:21–24.

(a) In the Health Assembly, Associate Members have the right to participate without vote in the deliberations of the Health Assembly and its main committees, and the right to participate with vote and to hold office in other committees or subcommittees of the Health Assembly, except the General Committee and the Committee on Credentials. Associate Members also have the right to participate equally with Members, subject to the limitation on voting recalled above, in matters pertaining to the conduct of business of meetings of the Health Assembly and its committees in accordance with relevant Rules of Procedure of the Health Assembly, to propose items for inclusion in the provisional agenda of the Health Assembly, to receive equally with Members all notices, documents, reports and records, and to participate equally with Members in the procedure for convening special sessions.

(b) In the Executive Board, Associate Members have the right, equally with Members, to submit proposals to the Executive Board and to participate in accordance with regulations established by the Board in committees of the Board. Accordingly, they have the right to participate without vote in the deliberations, including the right to speak after members of the Board, to make proposals and amendments thereto (which are considered by the Board if seconded by a Board member) and the right of reply, as well as the right to propose items for inclusion on the provisional agenda of the Board. Associate Members are however not eligible for membership on the Board.

(c) In the regional organizations, Associate Members have all rights and obligations, except that they do not enjoy the right to vote in plenary meetings of the regional committee, nor in subdivisions dealing with finance or constitutional matters.

(d) Associate Members are subject to the same obligations as Members, except that the difference in their status is taken into account in determining the amount of their contribution to the budget of the Organization.

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