

REGIONAL COMMITTEE FOR AFRICA**ORIGINAL: ENGLISH**Second special sessionVirtual session, 18 May 2025Provisional agenda item 4**Nomination of the Regional Director of the African Region****Note by the Legal Counsel****Contents**

	Paragraphs
Background	1–7
Procedure in advance of the special session of the Regional Committee	8–12
Procedure during the special session of the Regional Committee	13–17
Interview of candidates	18–19
Vote to nominate a candidate	20–22

Annexes

	Page
Annex 1. Criteria for the nomination of Regional Director	5
Annex 2. Proposed modalities for the interview of the candidate for the post of Regional Director for the African Region	6

Background

1. This document provides a summary of the nomination process for the next Regional Director of the African Region in the period leading up to, and during, the Second special session of the Regional Committee for Africa to be held on 18 May 2025 in Geneva, Switzerland.

2. Following the untimely death of Dr Faustine Ndugulile, who had been nominated for the post of Regional Director for Africa by the Seventy-fourth session of the Regional Committee for Africa in August 2024, and further to consultations with the Officers of the Regional Committee and the Regional Director, in accordance with Rule 5 of the Rules of Procedure of the Regional Committee for Africa, Member States of the African Region were invited to the First special session of the Regional Committee for Africa on the process for nominating and appointing the next Regional Director.

3. The First special session of the Regional Committee for Africa was held virtually on 14 January 2025. It decided to implement an accelerated procedure for nominating and appointing the next Regional Director and to suspend certain provisions regarding the nomination procedure for the Regional Director, as set out in Rule 52 of the Rules of Procedures of the Regional Committee for Africa, to the extent necessary, to facilitate the implementation of the accelerated procedure to nominate and appoint the next Regional Director for Africa.¹

4. Article 52 of the WHO Constitution provides that “the head of the regional office shall be the Regional Director appointed by the Board in agreement with the regional committee.” In accordance with the abovementioned accelerated procedure, the Regional Committee for Africa should consider the nomination of the Regional Director at its Second special session slated for 18 May 2025. This will enable the Executive Board to consider the matter at its 157th session in May 2025.

5. Rule 52 of the Rules of Procedure of the Regional Committee for Africa (the “Rules of Procedure”) governs the process by which the Regional Committee nominates a candidate for the post of Regional Director. The Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board set out how the Board then decides on the appointment of a person so nominated.

6. The Regional Committee for Africa revised the process for the nomination of the Regional Director at its Seventy-fourth session in 2024 and Fifty-third session in 2003 while, at the same time, reaffirming the applicability of the criteria for nomination to the post of Regional Director that it had initially adopted at its Forty-eighth session in 1998 (Annex 1 to this document). The Regional Committee further amended Rule 52 of the Rules of Procedure regarding the nomination process at its Sixty-third session in 2013. At its Sixty-eighth session in 2018, the Regional Committee adopted the Code of Conduct for the Nomination of the Regional Director of the African Region of the World Health Organization (the “Code of Conduct”) and further amended Rule 52 of the Rules of Procedure.

7. In the Code of Conduct, Member States acknowledged that the process for nominating the Regional Director should be guided both by the provisions of the Rules of Procedure and by the principles of fairness, equity, transparency, good faith, dignity, mutual respect, moderation, non-discrimination and merit.

¹ See AFR/RCSS1/Decision 2.

Procedure in advance of the special session of the Regional Committee

8. On 20 January 2025, the Director-General informed the Member States of the Region that each Member State could propose the name of one suitably qualified and experienced citizen of that State, who is professionally qualified in the area of health and has a sound knowledge of public health. He attached a copy of Rule 52 of the Rules of Procedure, the decision of the First special session of the Regional Committee for Africa (AFR/RCSS1/Decision 2) and a copy of the Code of Conduct, drawing the attention of Member States to the need to honour and adhere to the provisions set out in the Code of Conduct.² In addition, the Director-General indicated that proposals were to be sent to him, including in electronic format, to reach him no later than 18:00 Central European Time, Friday, 28 February 2025. Member States were also informed that proposals must include a curriculum vitae and other supporting documents totalling no more than 2000 words. These documents should comprise a statement of vision, priorities and strategies. It is recommended to use the standard curriculum vitae form attached to the Code of Conduct.³

9. In accordance with Rule 52.4 of the Rules of Procedure, the Director-General informed the Member States of the Region on 14 March 2025 that five proposals for the nomination of a Regional Director had been received by the applicable deadline. The curricula vitae submitted with these proposals were made available for review. One of the above-mentioned proposals was submitted by the proposing Member State electronically within the stipulated time indicated above, while the hard copy arrived a few hours later on the same day after the deadline had passed. Following consultation with the Officers of the Regional Committee for Africa, this proposal has been provisionally included among those dispatched to Member States. This inclusion is subject to the final determination of the Regional Committee for Africa at its Second special session on 18 May 2025.

10. As provided by Paragraph 16 of the Code of Conduct, following the dispatch of the name and particulars of the candidate to Member States by the Director-General, the Regional Office will post on its website the curriculum vitae of the candidate (as received from the relevant Member State by the deadline), as well as the relevant rules and decision points pertaining to the nomination process as stipulated in Rule 52 of the Rules of Procedure.

11. Further to the publication of the abovementioned information, the Director-General informed the Member States of the Region on 19 March 2025 that one Member State had withdrawn its proposal.

12. As provided by Decision 2 of the first special session of the Regional Committee for Africa, all four remaining candidates presented their experience and expertise, as well as their vision for the post of Regional Director, at a virtual live candidates' forum, held on 2 April 2025, which was broadcast on the Regional Office's website.

Procedure during the special session of the Regional Committee

13. The procedure for the nomination of the Regional Director during the special session of the Regional Committee consists of three stages:

- (i) establishment of a short list in the event that there are more than five candidates
- (ii) interview of candidates
- (iii) vote to nominate a candidate

² In accordance with Rule 52.1 of the Rules of Procedure.

³ In accordance with Paragraph 9 of the Code of Conduct.

14. Since the Director-General received only five candidatures, and one candidate subsequently withdrew, the Regional Committee will not need to establish a shortlist in accordance with Rule 52.6 of the Rules of Procedure but will instead proceed directly to interview the candidates.

15. Subject to the agreement of the Regional Committee, it is anticipated that the modalities for the interview will be decided on the morning of 18 May 2025, after which the four candidates will be interviewed. The vote to nominate a candidate will be conducted in the afternoon of 18 May 2025. It is anticipated that the interviews will take place in a public meeting to be broadcast on the Regional Office's website, while the vote will take place in private meetings of the Regional Committee, in accordance with Rule 52 of the Rules of Procedure.⁴ The outcome of the vote will be announced afterwards at a public meeting of the Committee. The name of the person so nominated will then be submitted to the Executive Board. Attendance at the private meetings of the Regional Committee mentioned above is prescribed by the Director-General and limited to essential Secretariat staff and Member States.⁵ Candidates should not attend these meetings even if they are part of the delegation of a Member State.⁶

16. Member States should abide strictly by Rule 52 of the Rules of Procedure and other applicable resolutions and uphold the integrity, legitimacy and dignity of the proceedings. As such, they should avoid behaviours and actions, both inside and outside the conference room where the nomination takes place, which could be perceived as seeking to influence the outcome of the nomination process.⁷ Member States should also respect the confidentiality of the proceedings and the secrecy of the votes. In particular, they should refrain from communicating or broadcasting the proceedings during the private meetings through electronic devices.⁸

17. Within delegations, any representative is entitled to vote on behalf of their delegation. In accordance with Rule 28 of the Rules of Procedure, representatives may designate an alternate to vote on behalf of the delegation, but not an adviser or a secretary. It is therefore of paramount importance that Members wishing to vote be represented at the Regional Committee and communicate to the Regional Director, if possible, 15 days prior to the date set for the opening of the special session of the Committee, the names of their representatives, including all alternates, advisers and secretaries. The credentials of representatives are to be delivered (electronically or by hand) to the Regional Director, if possible, no less than one day before the opening of the special session of the Committee.

Interview of candidates

18. Rule 52.7 of the Rules of Procedure provides that the interview shall consist of a presentation by each candidate in addition to answers to questions from Members of the Committee. The Committee shall determine, as appropriate, the modalities for the interviews. Rule 52 of the Rules of Procedure does not specify a topic for the presentation; therefore, it would appear most appropriate that the choice of topic be left to the candidate, as was done in the past.

19. The Regional Committee is expected to follow its established procedures for interviewing candidates, as amended by the Seventy-fourth Regional Committee. Details about these procedures are described in the Annex on the proposed modalities for the interview of the candidate (Annex 2 to this document).

⁴ In accordance with Paragraph 17 of the Code of Conduct.

⁵ In accordance with Paragraph 17 of the Code of Conduct.

⁶ In accordance with Paragraph 17 of the Code of Conduct.

⁷ In accordance with Paragraph 18 of the Code of Conduct.

⁸ In accordance with Paragraph 19 of the Code of Conduct.

Vote to nominate a candidate

20. The final stage involves voting by secret ballot in a private meeting of the Committee to nominate the candidate whose name is then submitted to the Executive Board for appointment. The procedure for this stage is set out in Rule 52.8 of the Rules of Procedure. Paragraph 17 of the Code of Conduct provides that the results of the ballots should not be disclosed by Member States.

21. Each representative entitled to vote shall indicate on the ballot paper the name of a single candidate. The candidate who obtains a majority of the valid votes cast (excluding abstentions) shall be declared nominated. In the event that no candidate obtains the majority required, the candidate with the least number of votes shall be eliminated. When the number of candidates is reduced to two, there shall be no more than three further ballots. If there is a tie after the third such ballot, the entire voting procedure outlined in this paragraph shall recommence based on the shortlist of candidates.

22. Rule 56 of the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board and Rule 52 of the Rules of Procedure of the Regional Committee provide that the appointment of a Regional Director shall be for five years. If the Executive Board appoints a Regional Director at its meeting in late May 2025, it may be anticipated that the appointment would begin shortly thereafter, specifically in early June 2025. The appointment would therefore expire at the end of May 2030 in accordance with the Rules mentioned above. Therefore, the Regional Committee may wish to recommend extending the term of office of the nominated candidate, if appointed by the Executive Board, until the end of January 2031. This would enable an election to take place at the regular session of the Regional Committee in the autumn of 2030, with the subsequent appointment taking place at the session of the Executive Board in January or February 2031. This would allow for a realignment of the timetable for nomination and appointment of the Regional Director with the timetable previously followed.

Annex 1: Criteria for the nomination of Regional Director

Qualifications

The following constitute the set of criteria that should be met by the candidate nominated to the post of Regional Director.

Good understanding of and commitment to the WHO mission

The candidate must demonstrate a clear understanding of WHO's mission, roles, functions, policies and strategies. There must be evidence of the candidate's personal involvement or a plan to further that commitment.

Proven leadership qualities

The candidate must be visionary, dynamic and results-oriented. It is very important that the candidate possess the ability to communicate both orally and in writing, in a clear, effective and inspiring way to diverse target groups, including the mass media, political leaders, other leaders in public health, health personnel, a wide range of academic and professional groups within and outside the health sector as well as WHO staff. He or she should have personal integrity and a strong capacity to withstand pressures from both official and private sources on issues that could jeopardize the Organization's interests.

Proven managerial ability

The candidate should be able to manage a complex organization in the health sector. This requires a highly analytical mind and the ability to set clear goals and objectives, design appropriate programmes for the optimal use of the Organization's overall resources, and develop an appropriate process for the monitoring and evaluation of the work of the Organization in the Region. It is important that the candidate possess skills in fostering teamwork with appropriate delegation of responsibility, and in creating a conducive work environment for staff at regional and country office levels. Given the need to interact with and actively support the efforts of headquarters and other regions within the context of the oneness of the Organization, the candidate's ability to work effectively with leaders, at both national and international levels, in the health and related sectors is an important requirement.

Professional and technical qualifications

The candidate should be professionally qualified in the health sector and have a sound knowledge of public health, including its epidemiological basis.

Sensitivity to cultural, social, political and other differences

The candidate should have a broad knowledge of and be sensitive to the varying cultural, social, political and linguistic differences of the Region. Therefore, he or she should be fluent in at least one of the three working languages of the Region and have a working knowledge of at least one of the other languages. Relevant working experience in the Region, particularly in the work of WHO, would be an asset.

Medical fitness

The candidate should be sufficiently healthy to carry out the duties of the post.

Annex 2: Proposed modalities for the interview of the candidate for the post of Regional Director for the African Region

It is proposed that the Regional Committee for Africa implement the modalities for interviewing the candidates for the post of Regional Director for the African Region at its second special session as follows:

1. Each interview will be limited to 40 minutes, divided equally between an oral presentation by the candidate for a maximum of 20 minutes and a question-and-answer period, also for a maximum of 20 minutes.
2. The presentations of the candidates are currently scheduled to be held during the morning meeting of the Regional Committee special session, on Sunday, 18 May 2025).
3. The Secretariat will time the presentations using a timekeeper. The light will remain green for 17 minutes, then turn to amber and then to red after the allotted 20 minutes have expired, at which point the Chairperson will request the candidate to terminate her or his statement;
4. Following the presentation by each candidate, delegations wishing to ask a question may place one of the name tags into a bowl. The Chairperson will then draw the name tags from the bowl one by one, randomly. The delegation whose name has been drawn will be given the floor to pose a question. Delegations will be invited to ask one question only and avoid multiple questions.
5. This part of the process will also be timed by two sets of traffic lights. One set of traffic lights will time the 20 minutes; the light will turn from green to amber after 17 minutes and will turn red after the 20 minutes have expired. The second set of traffic lights will measure the time allotted for each question; the light will turn to amber after 2 minutes and then to red after 3 minutes, at which point the Chairperson will request the candidate to terminate her or his response to each question.
6. The same process will be repeated until the 20 minutes have expired. If there are not enough questions to fill 20 minutes, the candidate will be invited to make an additional statement if he or she so wishes, provided that the 20 minutes allotted for this part of the interview are not exceeded.
7. Both the presentation and the question-and-answer session are conducted without the use of any visual aids, such as PowerPoint presentations, or the distribution of written materials in the meeting room.
8. It is proposed that, following the candidates' interviews, the Committee move immediately to a secret ballot to nominate the Regional Director in accordance with Rule 52.8 of the Committee's Rules of Procedure.