

The World Health Organization (WHO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations. Its work is carried out by three organs : the World Health Assembly, the supreme authority, to which all Member States send delegates ; the Executive Board, the executive organ of the Health Assembly, consisting of 24 persons designated by as many Member States ; and a Secretariat under the Director-General.

WHO's activities include programmes relating to a wide variety of public health questions : communicable and chronic degenerative diseases, radiation and isotopes, maternal and child health, mental health, dental health, veterinary public health, social and occupational health, nutrition, nursing, environmental health, public health administration, professional education and training, and health education of the public. In addition, WHO undertakes or participates in certain technical work of international significance, such as the compilation of an international pharmacopoeia, the setting up of biological standards and of various other international standards (pesticides and pesticide-spraying equipment, drinking-water, food additives), the control of addiction-producing drugs, the exchange of scientific information and the publication of medical literature, the drawing up of international sanitary regulations, the revision of the international list of diseases and causes of death, the collection and dissemination of epidemiological information, and statistical studies on morbidity and mortality.

The Director-General has authority to establish expert advisory panels on particular subjects and to select and appoint their members, who undertake to contribute by correspondence and without remuneration information or reports on developments within their own specialties. They serve in their personal capacity and not as representatives of governments or other bodies. Expert committees are convened to advise on particular subjects ; their members are selected by the Director-General from the advisory panels, the choice being governed by the agenda of each committee. The selection of members of both expert advisory panels and committees is based primarily upon their ability and technical experience, with due regard to adequate geographical distribution.

Reports of expert committees, while not necessarily expressing the views of the Organization, are taken into consideration in developing programmes.