

Join the race to

2030

Supporting advocates in the race to defeat meningitis

The World Health Assembly and meningitis

A summary for advocates



What is the World Health Assembly?

The World Health Assembly is the “**main decision-making body**” of the World Health Organization (WHO). All WHO member states (countries) can attend to discuss and agree on global health priorities and policies.



How often is it held and where?

The World Health Assembly is an annual meeting. It is usually held in May, at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, Switzerland.



What happens at meetings?

The World Health Assembly takes place over several days. Member states use this time to agree on global health priorities, through decisions and resolutions, and share updates on key programme areas. This is an important opportunity for global health issues to be addressed on an international stage. The World Health Assembly is also where WHO makes administrative decisions, including the election of leadership positions and agreeing on the organisation’s budget.



Why is the World Health Assembly important for meningitis?

The World Health Assembly plays an important role in the race to defeat meningitis. It brings together health leaders from across the globe to track progress, share updates and drive action.

In 2020, all member states (countries) approved the Global Road Map to Defeat Meningitis by 2030. It is a bold 10-year plan to reduce cases and deaths, stop epidemics and improve life for people affected by the disease.

The World Health Assembly provides an annual opportunity for countries to report on how they’re doing, tackle challenges together and find ways to collaborate on various health topics. For example, the meeting in 2025 included a dedicated update on progress against the road map (item 13.4, in the tenth committee A meeting).

As we reach the halfway point in road map implementation, this kind of check-in is essential. It helps to build momentum and ensure the world stays on track to defeat meningitis.



Who attends?

All WHO member states can send representatives to the meeting. Often, government health ministers will lead a country's delegation, supported by civil servants.

Non-state actors can attend the World Health Assembly, by invitation or through having "official relations" with WHO. Non-state actors include international charities, councils and federations. Representatives from these organisations can participate in discussions and side events but cannot vote.

A list of attendees is published by WHO and can be accessed online. This could be helpful for your advocacy, for example by identifying who represented your country when the Global Road Map to Defeat Meningitis by 2030 was approved at the World Health Assembly in 2020.



What is the executive board?

In basic terms, the Executive Board works to support the World Health Assembly. It is responsible for meeting preparations and considering how the decisions made by Member States can be implemented.

The Executive Board is composed of 34 members, who are elected for three-year terms. Members all come from different countries, with representation from each WHO region. Find out who currently sits on the board.

In February 2025, the Executive Board discussed a report on progress to implement the Global Road Map and to hear updates from member states and regions on their efforts. Read our blog to learn more.



What is a resolution?

A resolution is "a formal expression of will". The Defeating Meningitis by 2030 Global Road Map- resolution WHA73.9 - was approved at the World Health Assembly in November 2020.

By endorsing the road map, all 194 member states committed to pursuing its goals and making meningitis a political priority.

Resolutions at the World Health Assembly are not usually legally binding but indicate global priorities and commitment. Implementation of the global road map, for example, is the responsibility of each member state.

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Notes: This explainer has been created by Meningitis Research Foundation and sets out our current understanding. This guide has been created for CoMO members and other civil society organisations to support activists around the world in engaging with and advocating for the vision of the WHO Global Road Map to Defeat Meningitis by 2030.

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