

WHO 156th Executive Board – Skin Diseases as a Global Health Priority

The 156th Executive Board meeting of the World Health Organization was held from 3 to 11 February 2025 in Geneva. Deliberations on skin diseases took place on 5 and 7 February, highlighting the growing recognition of skin diseases as a global health priority. Delegates emphasized the need for integrated strategies, innovative diagnostics, and strengthened primary healthcare systems to address the significant public health burden posed by skin diseases. Requested actions for Member States, International Community and the WHO, included the development of a Global Action Plan on Skin Diseases with consultation with all relevant stakeholders and the support countries to update or develop National Action Plan.

Key Highlights:

Côte d'Ivoire, as the leading country, urged for immediate action to transform the resolution into tangible progress. It highlighted the need to expand access to affordable treatments, boost specialized training for healthcare professionals, and prioritize early detection and prevention. This decisive leadership underscores the critical importance of addressing skin diseases to alleviate their global impact and improve the well-being of millions.

Global Commitment: Strong support emerged for the draft resolution on skin diseases. Ethiopia, China, and Colombia joined Togo as co-sponsors of the resolution. Bangladesh voiced its support, emphasizing the need for improved access to treatment and local production of dermatological medicines.

Contributions from Member States:

Togo: Co-sponsored the resolution, stressing the importance of equitable access to dermatological care and calling for increased funding for skin disease initiatives.

Ethiopia: Co-sponsored the resolution, highlighting the burden of skin diseases in rural communities and the need for training healthcare workers.

China: Co-sponsored the resolution, emphasizing the potential of AI-based diagnostics to improve early detection and reduce costs.

Colombia: Co-sponsored the resolution, advocating for community-based interventions and national policy integration.

Bangladesh: Supported the resolution, focusing on local production of dermatological medicines and ensuring affordable access.

Yemen: Highlighted the challenges posed by conflict and climate change on managing skin diseases alongside other communicable diseases.

Japan: Expressed strong support, calling for comprehensive public health campaigns and advanced diagnostic tools.

Maldives: Addressed the need for better diagnostic infrastructure and improved training for healthcare providers.

France, Nigeria, and the Russian Federation: Acknowledged the importance of the resolution while also addressing broader communicable disease challenges.

International League of Dermatological Societies/Anesvad Foundation: Advocated for the resolution, citing the high global burden and the need for international collaboration.

The Carter Center and the Drugs for Neglected Diseases Initiative: Emphasized the need for research, development, and equitable access to skin disease treatments.

Innovative Solutions:

Delegates advocated for the use of AI-based diagnostic tools, enhanced laboratory capacity, and country-specific awareness campaigns.

Challenges and Needs:

Resource shortages, high costs, and social stigma were identified as key challenges, with calls for increased investments and integration of dermatological services into primary healthcare.

Next Steps:

Efforts will be focused in strengthening the resolution to ensure adoption at the upcoming 78th World Health Assembly in May 2025, with continued advocacy and support from additional Member States.