

Ref.: C.L.25.2026

The World Health Organization (WHO) presents its compliments to Member States and has the honour to refer to: resolution WHA63.16 (2010) on the WHO Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel (“the Code”); the reports of the Expert Advisory Groups on the WHO Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel as presented to the Seventy-third World Health Assembly in 2020 and to the Seventy-ninth World Health Assembly in 2026; decision WHA73(30) (2020); and resolution WHA79.12 (2026), including amendments to the Code.

Resolution WHA79.12 includes a request to the WHO Director-General to regularly (on a three-yearly basis) update the WHO Health Workforce Support and Safeguards List (SSL), and to incorporate flexibility in the application of the SSL as recommended by the Expert Advisory Group. Through this circular letter, the WHO Secretariat is sharing the provisional list of countries included in the SSL 2026 update and inviting Member States to indicate whether they wish to avail themselves of this flexibility. The Secretariat will reflect such indications in the SSL 2026 document, which will subsequently be published in accordance with standard clearance procedures.

With regard to the international recruitment of health personnel, Article 5.1 of the Code encourages destination countries to collaborate with source countries on health workforce development, and discourages active recruitment from countries facing critical shortage of health workers. Countries with the most pressing health workforce challenges are included in the SSL. Pursuant to decision WHA73(30), the SSL was first published in 2020 and an updated SSL was published in 2023.

The purpose of the SSL is to identify countries that: (i) should be prioritized by destination countries and development partners for investments in their health workforce; and (ii) can benefit the most from safeguards to minimize the potential negative impacts of health workforce migration, including by discouraging active international recruitment from these countries. Neither the Code nor the SSL limits the freedom of health personnel, in accordance with applicable laws, to migrate to countries that wish to admit and employ them. WHO recommends that, in the management of international recruitment of health workers from countries in the SSL, Member States consider government-to-government agreements that involve the Ministry of Health, ensure domestic health workforce supply remains adequate, and deliver proportionate benefits to the source countries’ health systems.

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... Based on the latest data on health workforce density and Universal Health Coverage (UHC) service coverage index, the provisional list of 36 countries in the SSL 2026 is enclosed (see Annex). WHO requests Member States to indicate, whether they seek:

- (a) an exemption from the recommendation to discourage active recruitment (for Member States **listed** in the Annex);
- (b) an extension of the recommendations on support and safeguards (for Member States **not listed** in the Annex).

Member States may submit the request by email to WHOGlobalCode@who.int no later than 31 August 2026. If no response is received by this date, the standard WHO recommendations on support and safeguards will apply to countries identified in the enclosed list; conversely no such recommendations will apply to countries not in the list that do not indicate otherwise.

Additional clarification can be obtained from the WHO Secretariat at the following email: WHOGlobalCode@who.int.

The World Health Organization takes this opportunity to renew to Member States the assurance of its highest consideration.

GENEVA, 8 June 2026

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Annex

(Provisional) WHO health workforce support and safeguards list (2026)

Countries in the table below have UHC service coverage index <50 AND health worker density (doctors, nurses and midwives per 10 000 population) <50.

African Region (27)	Region of the Americas (1)
Angola	Haiti
Benin	
Burkina Faso	Eastern Mediterranean Region (5)
Burundi	Afghanistan
Cameroon	Djibouti
Central African Republic	Somalia
Chad	Sudan
Congo	Yemen
Côte d'Ivoire	
Democratic Republic of the Congo	South-East Asia Region (1)
Equatorial Guinea	Timor-Leste
Eritrea	
Ethiopia	Western Pacific Region (2)
Gabon	Papua New Guinea
Guinea	Solomon Islands
Guinea-Bissau	
Liberia	
Madagascar	
Mali	
Mauritania	
Niger	
Nigeria	
Senegal	
Sierra Leone	
South Sudan	
Togo	
United Republic of Tanzania	
