

# WHO proposes budget cut after US exit, defends its work

By Jennifer Rigby | February 4, 2025

LONDON, Feb 3 (Reuters) - World Health Organization member states will discuss cutting part of its budget by \$400 million in light of President Donald Trump's move to withdraw the U.S., its biggest government funder, from the WHO, a document released on Monday showed.

Opening the U.N. agency's annual executive board meeting, WHO Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus also defended the WHO's work and recent reforms and reiterated a call for Washington to reconsider its exit and enter into dialogue with the agency on further change.

"We would welcome suggestions from the United States, and all member states, for how we can serve you and the people of the world better," he said.

The budget cut will be addressed at the Feb. 3-11 Geneva meeting, during which member state representatives will discuss the agency's funding and work for the 2026-27 period.

The executive board proposes cutting the base programmes section of the budget from a proposed \$5.3 billion to \$4.9 billion, according to a document released on Monday. That is part of the wider \$7.5 billion budget for 2026-27 that was originally proposed, including money for polio eradication and tackling emergencies.

"With the departure of the biggest financial contributor, the budget could not be 'business as usual,'" the document reads. The U.S. is the WHO's biggest government donor, contributing around 18% of its overall funding. The WHO has already separately taken some cost-cutting steps after the U.S. move.

However, some board representatives also wanted to send a message that the WHO would preserve its strategic direction despite the challenges, the document adds.

The \$4.9 billion is roughly the same as the base programme budget for the previous period, 2024-2025.

Trump moved to exit the WHO on his first day in office two weeks ago. The process will take one year under U.S. law.

On Monday, Tedros also specifically addressed some of Trump's criticisms, including around the handling of the COVID-19 pandemic and the WHO's independence.

He said the agency acted fast on the COVID outbreak, adding that the WHO is happy to say no to member states where requests go against its mission or science.

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