



**THE WORLD HEALTH  
ORGANIZATION  
FLAG CODE  
AND  
REGULATIONS**

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# WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

## FLAG CODE

CONSIDERING that in resolution WHA14.24 the World Health Assembly decided that the flag of the World Health Organization should be the official emblem adopted by the First World Health Assembly, centred on a United Nations blue background, and authorized the Director-General to adopt a flag code, having in mind the desirability of a regulated use of the flag and the protection of its dignity;

The Director-General, by virtue of the authority vested in him, adopts the following Flag Code:

### 1. *Design of Flag*

The flag of the World Health Organization shall be the official emblem of the World Health Organization, centred on a United Nations blue background. Such emblem shall appear in white, with the Aesculapian staff and serpent in gold, on both sides of the flag except where otherwise prescribed by regulation. The flag shall be made in such sizes as may from time to time be prescribed by regulation.

### 2. *Dignity of Flag*

The flag shall not be subjected to any indignity.

### 3. *Flag Protocol*

(1) Without prejudice to the status of the flag of the United Nations, as set forth in the United Nations Flag Code and Regulations, the flag of the World Health Organization shall not be subordinated to any other flag.

(2) The manner in which the flag of the World Health Organization may be flown, in relation to any other flag, shall be prescribed by regulation.

### 4. *Use of Flag by the World Health Organization*

(1) The flag shall be flown

(a) From all buildings, offices and other property occupied by the World Health Organization.

(b) From any official residence when such residence has been so designated by regulation.

(2) The flag shall be used by any unit acting on behalf of the World Health Organization such as any Committee or Commission or other entity established by the World Health Organization, in such circumstances not covered in this Code as may become necessary in the interests of the World Health Organization.

#### 5. *Use of Flag generally*

The flag may be used in accordance with this Flag Code by governments, organizations and individuals to demonstrate support of the World Health Organization and to further its principles and purposes. The manner and circumstances of display shall conform, insofar as appropriate, to the laws and customs applicable to the display of the national flag of the country in which the display is made.

#### 6. *Prohibition*

The flag shall not be used in any manner inconsistent with this Code or with any regulations made pursuant thereto. On no account shall the flag or a replica thereof be used for commercial purposes or in direct association with an article of merchandise.

#### 7. *Mourning*

The Director-General will prescribe by regulation or otherwise the cases in which the flag shall be flown at half-mast as a sign of mourning.

#### 8. *Manufacture and Sale of Flag*

(1) The flag may be manufactured for sale only upon written consent of the Director-General.

(2) Such consent shall be subject to the following conditions:

It shall be the responsibility of the manufacturer to ensure that every purchaser of the flag is furnished with a copy of this Code as well as a copy of any regulations issued pursuant thereto, and that each purchaser is informed that his use of the flag is subject to the conditions contained in this Code and in the regulations made pursuant thereto.

#### 9. *Violation*

Any violation of this Flag Code may be punished in accordance with the law of the country in which such violation takes place.

#### 10. *United Nations Flag*

Nothing in this Flag Code shall be deemed to prejudice the status of the flag of the United Nations as set forth in the United Nations Flag Code.

## 11. *Regulations*

(1) The Director-General may delegate his authority under this Code

(2) The Director-General or his duly authorized representative is the only person empowered to make regulations under this Code. Such regulations may be made for the purposes indicated in this Code and generally for the purpose of implementing or clarifying any provision of this Code whenever the Director-General or his duly authorized representative considers such implementation or clarification necessary.

GENEVA, 4 October 1961.

## REGULATIONS

These Regulations are issued in pursuance to Article 11 of the World Health Organization Flag Code dated 4 October 1961.

### I. DIMENSIONS OF FLAG

(1) In pursuance to Article 1 of the Flag Code the proportions of the World Health Organization Flag shall be :

(a) Hoist (width) of the World Health Organization Flag	—	2
Fly (length) of the World Health Organization Flag	—	3

or

(b) Hoist (width) of the World Health Organization Flag		3
Fly (length) of the World Health Organization Flag		5

or

(c) the same proportions as those of the national flag of any country in which the World Health Organization Flag is flown.

(2) The emblem shall in all cases be one-half of the hoist of the World Health Organization Flag and entirely centred.

### II. FLAG PROTOCOL

In pursuance to Article 3 (2) of the World Health Organization Flag Code the manner in which the World Health Organization Flag may be displayed is as follows:

#### 1. *General Provisions*

(a) Under Article 5 of the Flag Code the World Health Organization Flag may be displayed or otherwise used in accordance with the Flag Code by Governments, organizations and individuals to demonstrate support of the World Health Organization and to further its principles and purposes.

(b) The World Health Organization Flag may be displayed alone or with one or more other flags to demonstrate support of the World Health Organization and to further its principles and purposes.

(c) When the World Health Organization Flag is displayed with one or more other flags, all flags so displayed should be displayed on the same level and should be of approximately equal size.

(d) On no account may any flag displayed with the World Health Organization Flag be displayed on a higher level than the World Health Organization Flag and on no account may any flag so displayed with the World Health Organization Flag be larger than the World Health Organization Flag.

(e) The World Health Organization Flag may be displayed on either side of any other flag without being deemed to be subordinated to any such flag within the meaning of Article 3 (1) of the World Health Organization Flag Code.

(f) The World Health Organization Flag should normally only be displayed on buildings and on stationary flagstaffs from sunrise to sunset. The World Health Organization Flag may also be so displayed at night upon special occasions.

(g) The World Health Organization Flag should not be displayed on days when the weather is inclement.

(h) The World Health Organization Flag should never be carried flat or horizontally but always aloft and free.

(i) The Flag should never be used as drapery of any sort, never festooned, drawn back, nor up, in folds, but always allowed to fall free.

## 2. *Closed Circle of Flags*

In a closed circle of flags, flags other than the World Health Organization Flag should be displayed in the English alphabetical order of the countries represented by the flags reading clockwise. The flagpole immediately opposite the main entrance of the main building determines the beginning of the circle. At World Health Organization headquarters it is customary to shift the flags each time they are displayed according to a clockwise rotating system. The World Health Organization Flag should always be displayed on and not shifted from either the flagpole immediately opposite the main entrance of the main adjacent building or the flagpole in the centre of the circle of flags. At the World Health Organization headquarters or regional offices, the World Health Organization Flag should normally only be displayed in an appropriate place on the main building of the World Health Organization for the area.

## 3. *Line, Cluster or Semi circle of Flags*

In line, cluster or semi circle groupings all flags other than the World Health Organization Flag shall be displayed in the English alphabetical order of the countries represented by the flags starting from the left and reading clockwise. The World Health Organization Flag should either be displayed in the centre of the line, cluster or semi circle or, in cases where two World Health Organization Flags are available, at either end of the line, cluster or semi circle.

#### 4 *National Flag of the Country in which the Display takes place*

(a) The national flag of the country in which the display takes place should appear in its normal position according to the English alphabetical order.

(b) When the country in which the display takes place wishes to make a special display of its national flag, such a special display can only be made when the arrangement of the flags takes the form of a line, cluster or semi circle grouping, in which case the national flag of the country in which the display is taking place should be displayed at each end of the line of flags separated from the grouping by an interval of not less than one fifth of the total length of the line.

### III USE OF FLAG GENERALLY

(a) In accordance with Article 5 of the World Health Organization Flag Code the World Health Organization Flag may be used to demonstrate the support of the World Health Organization and to further its principles and purposes.

(b) It is deemed especially appropriate that the World Health Organization Flag should be displayed on the following occasions:

(i) On World Health Day, April 7.

(ii) On the occasion of any official event which might or is desired to be related in some way to the World Health Organization.

### IV. PROHIBITIONS

(a) In accordance with Article 6 of the World Health Organization Flag Code on no account shall the World Health Organization Flag or a replica thereof be used for commercial purposes or in direct association with an article of merchandise.

(b) Notwithstanding anything to the contrary contained in clause (a) of this section, neither the World Health Organization Flag nor any replica thereof shall be stamped, printed, engraved or otherwise affixed on any stationery, books, magazines, periodicals or other publications of any nature whatsoever in a manner such as could imply that any such stationery, books, magazines, periodicals or other publications were published by or on behalf of the World Health Organization unless such is in fact the case or in a manner such as has the effect of advertising a commercial product.

(c) Subject to the provisions of clauses (b) and (d) of this section neither the World Health Organization Flag nor any replica thereof should be affixed in any manner on any article of any kind which is not strictly necessary to

the display of the World Health Organization Flag itself. Without restricting the generality of the foregoing sentence the World Health Organization Flag should not be reproduced on such articles as cushions, handkerchiefs and the like, nor printed nor otherwise impressed on paper napkins or boxes, nor used as any portion of costume or athletic uniform or other clothing of any kind, nor used on jewelry.

*(d)* Notwithstanding anything to the contrary contained in this section, a replica of the World Health Organization Flag may be manufactured in the form of a lapel button.

*(e)* No mark, insignia, letter, word, figure, design, picture or drawing of any nature shall ever be placed upon or attached to the World Health Organization Flag or placed upon any replica thereof.

## V MOURNING

*(a)* In accordance with Article 7 of the World Health Organization Flag Code, whenever the Director-General of the World Health Organization proclaims that the World Health Organization is in official mourning, the World Health Organization Flag, wherever displayed, shall mark such an event by being flown at half-mast during the period of official mourning.

*(b)* Regional Directors, Chiefs of Area Offices and Chiefs of World Health Organization missions away from headquarters are authorized by the Director-General to lower the World Health Organization Flag to half-mast in cases where they wish to follow official mourning in the country in which such Offices or missions have their headquarters.

*(c)* The World Health Organization Flag when displayed at half-mast should first be hoisted to the peak for an instant and then lowered to the half-mast position. The Flag should again be raised to the peak before it is lowered for the day. By "half-mast" is meant lowering the Flag to one-half the distance between the top and bottom of the mast.

*(d)* Crepe streamers may be affixed to flagstaffs flying the World Health Organization Flag in a funeral procession only by order of the Director-General of the World Health Organization.

*(e)* When the World Health Organization Flag is used to cover a casket, it should not be lowered into the grave or allowed to touch the ground.

## VI. UNITED NATIONS FLAG

Nothing in these Regulations shall be deemed to prejudice the status of the Flag of the United Nations as set forth in the United Nations Flag Code and the Regulations issued pursuant thereto.



## VII. ALPHABETICAL ORDER

The list of Members of the World Health Organization in the English alphabetical order is set out in Appendix 1 of the current edition of the Basic documents of the World Health Organization.

Geneva, 4 October 1961.<sup>1</sup>

*Note:* In the event of any provision contained in this code or in any regulation made under this code being in conflict with the laws of any State governing the use of its national flag, said laws of any such State shall prevail.

<sup>1</sup> Amended on 19 October 1971.