

Moscow Miffed as Ukraine Wins WHO Executive Berth

By [AFP](#)

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EPA/MARTIAL TREZZINI

Russia failed Friday in a bid to prevent Ukraine taking a place on the World Health Organization's Executive Board, on a day which also saw North Korea gain a berth.

Ten countries joined the board for a three-year term but Russia tried to exclude Ukraine, which it invaded 15 months ago, from joining the 34-nation forum at the ongoing World Health Assembly in Geneva.

Normally those joining the forum, which plays a key role in the governance of the WHO, are elected on the nod but Moscow forced the first vote since 1977 at this year's 76th assembly.

In the event, the vote was easily carried by 123 votes to 13.

Wednesday had seen WHO member countries back a resolution condemning Russia's continued war against Ukraine and its attacks on health care services, in a move that Russia

claimed politicizes the body.

"Today's vote marked a stunning defeat for Russia, which failed in its reckless attempts to undermine the authority of the WHO regional committees and disrupt the work of the World Health Assembly and its Executive Board," said Ukraine's UN ambassador in Geneva, Yevheniia Filipenko.

"Health must not be politicized. The WHO must be allowed to function normally," tweeted the French delegation in congratulating Ukraine for overcoming "Russian attempts at obstruction."

Russia's delegation stated: "We deeply regret the fact that the assembly has voted for a country that will simply further politicize the work of the EB," saying it opposed "politicization of the work of the WHA and of the WHO as a whole."

There was further acrimony at the gathering after the United States said it regretted the extension of a place for North Korea after it was put forward by South East Asia.

The US delegation said it had "grave concerns" the Pyongyang government did not share WHO values citing the regime's "appalling record of human rights violations and abuses (which) has been regularly documented by UN bodies, as well as widely condemned by the international community.

"And its continued development of its weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missile programs violates multiple UN Security Council resolutions."

The US delegation urged Pyongyang "to respect human rights, fulfill its obligations under UN Security Council resolutions, and engage in serious and sustained diplomacy."

The North Korean delegation retorted that "we deeply regret that one country (...) is trying to abuse this forum for its own despicable political purposes and pushing confrontation".

Others joining the board Friday were Australia, Barbados, Cameroon, the Comoros Islands, Lesotho, Qatar, Switzerland and Togo.

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