



European Union

Statement

WHO

156th Executive Board

(3-11 February 2025)

Agenda item 13- Global traditional medicine strategy (2025–2034)

Geneva, 7 February 2025

WHO

156th Executive Board

Agenda item 13- Global traditional medicine strategy (2025–2034)

Director-General, Members of the Executive Board, Excellencies, Colleagues,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the EU and its Member States.

The candidate countries North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania, Republic of Moldova, Bosnia and Herzegovina^{*} and Georgia as well as Armenia align themselves with this statement.

The EU thanks the Director-General for the report on the draft global traditional medicine strategy.

We acknowledge the importance of protecting traditional medicine in its diversity and welcome the continued work of WHO through consistently respecting the principle of a science and evidence-based approach, through tackling misinformation and promoting health literacy and trust in science.

The EU strongly supports the strengthening of primary health care systems to achieve UHC and to ensure equitable, person-centered, resilient, and quality health services. In order not to inadvertently promote ineffective or harmful practices under a vague umbrella term, or to undermine WHO's unique status as a science- and evidence-based organization that sets globally applicable norms and standards, we need clarity on the subject matter. We see a difference between the safeguarding of traditional and indigenous medical knowledge and the integration thereof into medical systems. Without delegitimizing the significance of these practices, Member states should therefor implement the strategy based on their specific regional and cultural factors as well as their legal frameworks.

In the light of limited resources, we highlight the importance of focusing on high-impact global health outcomes, and on common norms and standards to prioritize the knowledge to avoid duplicative work and to allow for comparisons between studies and practices. Whether applied to research, regulatory mechanisms or health system implementation, any such norms should

^{*} North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

adhere to the same principles of safety, effectiveness and scientific as well as ethical rigor as biomedical approaches, including the preservation of endangered species.

We request further guidance regarding inclusion of TCIM in cross-sector policies, including implementing the Quadripartite' s One Health Joint Plan of action. While including traditional knowledge from indigenous communities to guide One Health decision-making remains essential, the links between holistic health and the One Health approach should not undermine its scientific purpose and cause confusion regarding its aim and operationalization.

Mindful that there may be significant economic interests involved in TCIM, we recommend due diligence when engaging with industry and practitioners, in line with FENSA, to prevent undue influence.

Finally, we observe significant developments in the strategy text after the last member state consultation on August 22nd. While we welcome many of these improvements, we would have appreciated a more transparent and predictable process.

Chair, we remain interested in this process and hope we can receive further information to conclude its work in a constructive way. In the meanwhile, the EU and its Member States are not ready to adopt the draft decision presented to the EB and request further consultation with Member States on the draft traditional medicine strategy and its financial implications in the programme budget prior to its consideration by the 77th WHA.

Thank you, chair.