

The **second WHO Global Summit on Traditional Medicine**, held in New Delhi, India, on 17–19 December 2025, has the theme of “Restoring balance: The science and practice of health and well-being”. The Summit aligns with the [Global Traditional Medicine Strategy 2025–2034](#), which recognizes Traditional Medicine as a living science that contributes to universal health coverage, health equity and sustainability. The Summit serves as a global platform to accelerate implementation of the new strategy, foster partnerships, and translate pledges and commitments into concrete action.



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Parallel session 1.C

Healthy ecosystems, healthy futures through Traditional Medicine

Plenary 1 and associated parallel sessions will serve to anchor the Summit’s vision of balance across body, mind, community and the planet, as aligned with the Global Traditional Medicine Strategy 2025–2034 and global declarations.

This parallel session is interested in the role of Traditional Medicine and traditional understandings of health, well-being and healing in ecosystem stewardship, with an aim towards understanding how Traditional Medicine can contribute to the restoration of human–ecosystem balance. The session seeks to explore the foundations of human–ecosystem balance, disruptions to and gaps in this balance, current contributions and innovations to improve balance, and pathways for future action. The session will solicit viewpoints from speakers who work from within existing frameworks for holistic human and planetary health and well-being, including Planetary Health, One Health and Indigenous and other traditional knowledge paradigms.

Rationale

Integrated approaches that address the interconnectedness of human and ecosystem health have been successfully implemented in communities around the world, including under the frameworks of Planetary Health, One Health and EcoHealth (1,2). At the same time, holistic understandings of the ways in which healthy people, healthy societies and healthy environments intersect, overlap and align predate modern science and are fundamental to many Indigenous and alternative knowledge paradigms (3,4). Indigenous knowledge holders have repeatedly called for the elevation of Indigenous epistemologies, governance modalities and evidentiary frameworks (e.g. Two-Eyed Seeing) to sit equitably alongside Western frameworks of holistic ecosystem and human health and well-being to redress this imbalance between people and the planet (5). Meanwhile, the interface between these paradigms has been emphasized in such frameworks as the Global Traditional Medicine Strategy 2025–2034, the Draft Global Action Plan on Climate Change and Health, the Report of the High-Level Commission on Universal Health in the 21st Century, and the Planetary Health Roadmap and Action Plan, among others (6–9). Exploring this interface can illuminate synergies that might be leveraged by both Traditional Medicine and healthy ecosystem initiatives. Moreover, evidence-based examples of these synergies can provide an inspiration and a blueprint for action for others wishing to embark upon such initiatives in the future.

Objectives

- Share lessons learned from those working within the intersection between ecosystem and human health, including perspectives from Indigenous and alternative knowledge paradigms and One Health and Planetary Health frameworks.
- Identify pathways of action to both (1) achieve balance between human and ecosystem health and (2) strengthen the balance between knowledge paradigms in the design and implementation of policies, plans and programmes.
- Reposition Traditional Medicine and traditional understandings of health, well-being and healing as drivers of ecosystem stewardship, planetary health and sustainable well-being.

Guiding questions

1. **Foundations of balance:** In what ways have traditional/Indigenous/ancestral understandings of health, well-being and healing and traditional ecological knowledge been foundational to understanding balance between people and the planet?
2. **Disruptions to balance:** How have historic and contemporary disruptions led to the gap between, on one hand, traditional approaches to medicine and the health, well-being and healing of people and ecosystems and, on the other, conventional health and environmental practices?
3. **Contributions to balance:** What positive contributions are Traditional Medicine and traditional approaches to health, well-being and healing presently making to ecosystem stewardship, biodiversity and climate resilience? What evidence and/or examples exist of this contribution?
4. **Pathways to balance:** What transformative actions can reposition Traditional Medicine as a driver of planetary health and sustainable well-being?

Session format

The proposed session format is a keynote presentation that proceeds to a roundtable dialogue/“talking circle” between Indigenous knowledge holders and implementers from Planetary and One Health initiatives, along with – if possible – a WHO or UN environmental or planetary health representative. There will be four guiding questions. The microphone will pass to each of the panellists to reflect on these questions for three to five minutes each, speaking to each other and to the audience, and listening and sharing perspectives. Guiding questions will also be displayed on a PowerPoint projection to allow audience members to think about the questions during the conversation. There will be an opportunity for audience participation whereby each participant will be invited to join the speakers in the circle, with additional chairs placed to ensure participants from the audience are on an equal footing with the speakers (i.e., to redress the imbalance between the audience members and the speakers), allowing them to take the microphone in turn. The session will close with speakers outlining one or two specific, measurable action points as pathways to balance, which strengthen the balance between human and ecosystem health and advance synergies and dialogue across knowledge paradigms through positioning Traditional Medicine as a paradigmatic bridge.

References

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