



# The Gujarat Declaration, India, as a milestone in the strengthening of Traditional and Complementary Medicine in Primary Health Care

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The First World Health Organization (WHO) World Summit on Traditional Medicine, held in Gandhinagar, Gujarat, India, in August 2023 <sup>[1]</sup>, has marked an important milestone in the recognition and appreciation of traditional and complementary health practices. This event, which concluded with the Gujarat Declaration, highlights the relevance of traditional and complementary medicine (TCM) in the context of global health. The Gujarat Declaration not only reinforces the commitments previously set out in the Alma Ata and Astana declarations, which promote the integration of Traditional Medicine and indigenous knowledge in Primary Health Care, but also emphasizes the need for scientific evidence in the development of MTyC; as well as the holistic view of the person interacting with their ecosystem and social environment. <sup>[2,3,4]</sup>

This perspective highlights the implementation of interventions that support improving universal health access and coverage and the health-related Sustainable Development Goals. In addition, the Declaration underlines the importance of science, technology, innovation and knowledge sharing to enhance the contribution of MTyC and indigenous knowledge to the well-being of people and the planet, reflecting, in addition, a commitment to quality and patient safety.

On the other hand, the Regional Forum: Alliance for Primary Health Care in the Americas, held in Montevideo, Uruguay, in December 2023, underscored the importance of adapting health care models to specific territorial realities. This forum highlighted the integration of MT&C into health systems, recognizing its essential role in responding to the unique needs of each community <sup>[5]</sup>

The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) has led the Indigenous Peoples' Health initiative since the 1990s <sup>[5]</sup>, highlighting the link between culture and health and the rights to preventive and healing traditions of Indigenous Peoples, Afro-descendants and other ethnic groups. With the adoption of the "Policy on Ethnicity and Health" in 2017 <sup>[6]</sup>, followed by the "Strategy and Action Plan (2019-2025)" <sup>[7,8]</sup> and the 2023 Progress Report on this strategy, which provides a comprehensive assessment of progress and challenges. Finally, also in that year, the World Health Assembly adopted its first resolution on the Health of Indigenous Peoples <sup>[9]</sup>, reinforcing commitment in this crucial area.

The second WHO Traditional Medicine Strategy 2014-2023 <sup>[10]</sup>, promoted in Member States the harnessing of the contributions of MTyC to health and well-being, person-centred health care and universal health coverage, as well as the safe and effective provision of traditional and complementary medicine services. The WHO is currently

## Información del artículo

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**Citar como:** Gonseth-García J, Gallego-Pérez D, Villar-López M. The Gujarat Declaration, India, as a milestone in the strengthening of Traditional and Complementary Medicine in Primary Health Care. Rev Peru Med Integrativa. 2024; 9(1).

developing a new strategy for the period 2025-2034, holding regional consultations this year to advance this process.

Likewise, WHO, with the support of the Government of India in 2022, established the Global Centre for Traditional Medicine, the first WHO centre dedicated to knowledge in MTyC. The Gujarat Declaration outlines a future where human, planetary health and sustainability are intrinsically linked. In addition, with the support of Collaborating Centers, such as the Complementary Medicine Management of EsSalud in Peru, and other international collaboration initiatives, progress will continue to be made in a more inclusive and integrative approach to health, valuing ancestral traditions and promoting interculturality in health <sup>[11]</sup>.

The Virtual Health Library specialized in Traditional, Complementary and Integrative Medicine (VHL-TCIM), promoted by the Latin American and Caribbean Center for Health Sciences Information (BIREME/PAHO/WHO) <sup>[11]</sup>, is an outstanding example of technical cooperation that promotes the quality and reliability of knowledge in MTyC.

We hope that, just as the Alma Ata Declaration became a foundational document in understanding the role of Primary Health Care, the Gujarat Declaration will be remembered as a defining moment in the history of MTyC and the transformations towards people- and community-centred health systems.

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