

Foreword to the release of the WHO Traditional Medicine Strategy 2014-2023

By Dr. Margaret Chan, Director-General of WHO

Across the world, traditional medicine (TM) is either the mainstay of health care delivery or serves as a complement to it. In some countries, traditional medicine or non-conventional medicine may be termed complementary medicine (CM). The World Health Assembly (WHA) resolution on Traditional Medicine (WHA62.13), adopted in 2009, requested the WHO Director-General to update the *WHO Traditional Medicine Strategy 2002-2005*, based on countries' progress and current new challenges in the field of traditional medicine. The *WHO Traditional Medicine Strategy 2014-2023* thus reappraises and builds on the *WHO Traditional Medicine Strategy 2002–2005*, and sets out the course for TM and CM (T&CM) in the next decade.

Traditional and Complementary Medicine (T&CM) is an important and often underestimated part of health care. T&CM is found in almost every country in the world and the demand for its services is increasing. TM, of proven quality, safety, and efficacy, contributes to the goal of ensuring that all people have access to care. Many countries now recognize the need to develop a cohesive and integrative approach to health care that allows governments, health care practitioners and, most importantly, those who use health care services, to access T&CM in a safe, respectful, cost-efficient and effective manner. A global strategy to foster its appropriate integration, regulation and supervision will be useful to countries wishing to develop a proactive policy towards this important - and often vibrant and expanding - part of health care.

Much has changed since the previous global strategy was published in 2002. More countries have gradually come to accept the contribution that T&CM can make to the health and well-being of individuals and to the comprehensiveness of their health-care systems. Governments and consumers are interested in more than herbal medicines, and are now beginning to consider aspects of T&CM practices and practitioners and whether they should be integrated into health service delivery. In order to meet this new demand, and in response to Resolution WHA62.13 on TM, WHO recently updated the objectives of the Traditional Medicine Programme.

The *WHO Traditional Medicine Strategy 2014-2023* will help health care leaders to develop solutions that contribute to a broader vision of improved health and patient autonomy. The strategy has two key goals: to support Member States in harnessing the potential contribution of T&CM to health, wellness and people-centred health care and to promote the safe and effective use of T&CM through the regulation of products, practices and practitioners. These goals will be reached by implementing three strategic objectives: 1) building the knowledge base and formulating national policies; 2) strengthening safety, quality and effectiveness through regulation; and, 3) promoting universal health coverage by integrating T&CM services and self-health care into national health systems. Updating and enhancing the strategy has allowed WHO to acquire a better understanding of how to boost the global integration of T&CM into health systems. My hope is that it will provide

Member States with a road map to achieving further success in their T&CM strategic planning.

I am very pleased to introduce the *WHO Traditional Medicine Strategy 2014-2023*. It is my conviction that it will be a valuable tool for governments, system planners and health practitioners and – most crucially – will benefit individuals seeking the right care, from the right practitioner, at the right time.