



# MAASAI MARA UNIVERSITY

## THE CENTER OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION

*Leaving a strong and rich legacy into the future.*

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### THE INTERNATIONAL WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION AFRICAN TRADITIONAL MEDICINE DAY ON MONDAY, AUGUST 31ST, 2026



On Monday, August 31st, 2026, is a day we shall mark with celebrations to commemorate the **International World Health Organization (WHO) African Traditional Medicine**. It was on this day that a landmark resolution was adopted in 2000 by African health ministers during the 50th session of the WHO Regional Committee for Africa in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso to recognize the important role of ethnomedicines in providing **accessible, affordable and culturally-rooted healthcare services** to millions of people across the continent of Africa. Every year, the day of **31st August** serves as a reminder of the important role of ethnomedicines in achieving the **universal health coverage** and **health goals of Africa's Agenda 2063**.

This day of **31st August**, honours the critical role of **traditional healing** in **African health systems** and **cultures** and is a symbolic reminder of the deeply-rooted **cultural health systems in human life** and henceforth, its **preservation and strengthening of its regulatory frameworks**. These celebrations being organized to take place on Monday, 31st August, 2026 at Maasai Mara University with the **theme** "Scaling the Heights of African Ethnomedicines through innovation, integration and research", mark the 2nd commemoration at the Institution while aligning with the **WHO Global Traditional Medicine Strategy 2025-2034**, which focuses on **safe, effective and evidence-based ethnomedicines**, while recognizing the practice of **integrative medicine** (integrating traditional healing practices with conventional healthcare approaches) and the **rights of Indigenous Peoples** and the importance of **protection** of and **access** to ethnomedical knowledge in national and local healthcare systems without compromising public safety.

The holistic **benefits of Ethnomedicine Industry** cannot be fully realized without observing the **guiding principles** of the **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)** as an all-inclusive landmark international treaty adopted during the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 alongside the United Nations **Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)** and the **Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)** (collectively known as the "Three Rio Conventions", with the goal of **conservation, sustainable utilization and equitable sharing** of biodiversity and its components together with its key protocols: the **Cartagena Protocol** on

Biosafety and **Nagoya Protocol** on Access and Benefit-Sharing as well as its mechanisms of The Cali Fund and the Conference of the Parties - COP. The commemoration too reminds us of the **1978 Alma-Ata Declaration** that recognized ethnomedicines as essential and culturally acceptable component of integration into primary health care (PHC) for achieving “Health for All”, globally, and whose adoption has witnessed significant successes in countries like China and India but **limited progress elsewhere, in particular, Africa**.

While in Africa, it is paramount to remember that the then Organization of the African Unity (OAU) Heads of State and Government, declared the period 2001 - 2010 as the ***African Decade on African Traditional Medicine*** in Lusaka in July 2001, whereas **The Algiers Declaration** in June 26th, 2008 promoted research in traditional medicine whose fruits are in progress.

In Kenya, with the enactment of **Industrial Property Act** No. 3 of 2001, **The Copyright Act**, 2001 (Chapter 130, 2014 Revised Edition), **The Protection of Traditional Knowledge and Cultural Expressions Act** 2016 (Revised 2018), and **The Health Act** 2017 in Kenya, the legal framework of Ethnomedicines is **gradually** taking shape in time and space albeit its state of confusion, competition, resistance from the conventional health practitioners and lack of strategic implementation framework of these Acts.

On this 2nd commemoration of African Traditional Medicine Day at the University, it is important to remember that there are **great challenges**, which require concerted efforts from **all stakeholders** to responsibly resolve them. These include: - recognition of ethnopractitioners, restoration of their lost glory, implementation of laws and policies, capacity building, assurance of safety, quality and efficacy of traditional remedies, sustainability of resource materials, institutionalization of ethnomedicines and their integration into conventional approaches and bioprospecting and biopiracy at local, national and international levels.

At Maasai Mara University, these celebrations will be organized and conducted under the following **title, theme and objective**.

**Title:** “Unlocking the Economic Potential of Cultural Heritage and Ethnomedicines in the 21st Century and the Challenges of Legal Frameworks.”

**Theme:** “Scaling the Heights of African Ethnomedicines through innovation, integration and research.”

**Objective:** To promote research, documentation and standardization of ethnomedicines.

Notable anticipated features of the 2026 commemoration shall include: -

- **Focus on safe, effective and evidence-based:** The theme aims to generate reliable, replicable and accessible data on the efficacy, safety and evidence-based ethnoremedies.
- **Implication:** Ethnomedicines remain a primary healthcare source for over 80% of Africa’s population.
- **Festivities:** Events in 2026 shall include presentations, round-table discussions and exhibitions by ethnopractitioners.
- **Goal:** To honour African cultural heritage while ensuring quality, safety and efficacy of ethnoremedies, moving toward better regulatory frameworks, standardization and integration.