



## 2<sup>nd</sup> Southern African Mountain Conference 17–20 March 2025

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### ROYAL MOUNTAIN INDABA<sup>1</sup>

Following the highly successful 1<sup>st</sup> Southern African Mountain Conference (SAMC2022) held in March 2022, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Southern African Mountain Conference (SAMC2025) will be held from the 17<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> March 2025. SAMC2025 will be driven by the Afromontane Research Unit (ARU) (University of the Free State), in partnership with the African Mountain Research Foundation (AMRF) and the Global Mountain Safeguard Programme (GLOMOS). SAMC2025 will be held at Champagne Sports Resort, in the central Maloti-Drakensberg in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. UNESCO was the official Patron of SAMC2022 and has been approached in the same role for SAMC2025.

Large tracts of mountain land in southern Africa are under customary law and are administered by hereditary Traditional Authorities, including Royal Houses. Although these Traditional Authorities overlap with elected governance structures (municipal, provincial, state, and the Southern African Development Community [SADC]), their involvement and influence is different and they are often much more influential in their contexts than elected systems. They also have strong transboundary relationships across the mountains that straddle international borders in the region. As a result, there is a largely overlooked need to bring the custodians of customary law and their indigenous knowledge systems together to foster dialogue and collaboration for transboundary issues that impact on the sustainable development of southern African mountains.

A key component of SAMC2025 will be a **Royal Mountain Indaba** as a special event for and with Traditional Authorities in southern Africa that have customary law jurisdiction over mountain landscapes. This will comprise a focus on the Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> March 2025 with key Traditional Authorities represented by invitation. The purpose of the day would be to foster dialogue among Traditional Authorities on their role in (i) the sustainable development of southern African mountains; (ii) better and more effective transboundary relationships for sustainable development; and (iii) how to contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals for the benefit for their mountain communities. A further goal would be to encourage these Traditional Authorities to become Diplomatic Champions for southern African Mountains.

SAMC2025 has approached the Royal Society of South Africa and their journal *Transactions of the Royal Society of South Africa* for a special issue of SAMC2025, bridging the original (United Kingdom) Royal Charter of the Society to include indigenous southern African Royal Houses, for the sustainable development of southern African mountains.

The Royal Mountain Indaba will necessarily require careful planning that respects protocols associated to each Traditional Authority, from invitation through to in-person attendance of representatives at the event. A dedicated sponsor of the Indaba, with a commitment and interest in these important issues, will be identified.

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<sup>1</sup> *Indaba* is a widely recognised isiZulu word meaning an important meeting of leaders of a community to discuss matters of concern. It suggests 'deep talk' and a meeting of minds, acknowledging that all those present have something important to say.

