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Primary Health Care

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Honourable Chair, Distinguished Delegates,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of the International Council of Nurses and the over 28 million nurses worldwide.

ICN acknowledges the World Health Organization's draft Regional Framework on the Future of Primary Health Care in the Western Pacific.

A strong primary health care (PHC) system is critical for the attainment of universal health coverage and responding to the changing health needs and expectations of populations. ICN would like to highlight the importance of investing in nursing to optimize primary health care and support its response to health emergencies whilst ensuring continuity of care for people. The ability to build strong and resilient health systems in the region will be dependent on a high-performing primary health care system. We emphasize that this will require a motivated, equitably distributed PHC workforce that is aligned with population and community health needs. Sustaining this will require building capacity to meet the growing demand which is driven by rapid demographic, epidemiological, economic, social and political changes.

ICN recognises that the health care workforce is under pressure, particularly in PHC. The shortage in the nursing workforce is particularly concerning. In addition, we believe that the workforce is not being used to its full potential. There is a widening gap between the needs of the health care and education systems producing the health professional workforce. ICN strongly supports WHO's recommendation in maximizing the utilization, productivity and performance of the existing workforce. We also commend WHO Western Pacific Region's commitment to strengthen the nursing and midwifery workforce with a focus on quality education, safe, healthy and satisfying work environments and nursing and midwifery leadership and management.

ICN and its members call on Member States to:

- Commit to developing regional and national action plans related to building and supporting the PHC health professional workforce
- Commit to investing and implementing the WHO Global Strategic Directions for Nursing and Midwifery with its focus on four key areas: invest in nursing education, nursing jobs, nursing leadership, and nursing practice and service delivery
- Commit to integrated and team-based PHC to deliver effective and comprehensive care
- Develop and build the Advanced Practice Nursing workforce to improve access to PHC
- Support and invest in Chief Nursing Officer positions across all countries and within WHO Western Pacific region.

These recommendations will improve access to quality, safe and affordable PHC that is able to meet surge demand as the need arises. We look forward to working with you on this important programme.

The **International Council of Nurses (ICN)** is a federation of more than 130 national nurses associations representing the millions of nurses worldwide. Operated by nurses and leading nursing internationally, ICN works to ensure quality nursing care for all and sound health policies globally.