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Provisional agenda item 5

Reinventing primary health care in the post-COVID-19 era

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The International Council of Nurses (ICN) and the European Forum of National Nursing and Midwifery Associations (EFNNMA) firmly believe that strengthening primary health care (PHC) is a core strategy for strengthening health systems and for economic and social development in the European Region.

The COVID-19 pandemic has underlined the importance of a strong PHC system and that nurses and midwives are critical to the functioning of this system.

Nurses and midwives make an essential contribution to all components of PHC: empowering individuals, families and communities to own and advocate for their health; ensuring health in all policies in order to address the social determinants of health; and delivering public health and primary care throughout the life course. As the principal group of healthcare workers providing PHC across different settings throughout the life course, they support the building of bridges between primary health, public health and social services.

The effective and safe delivery of comprehensive PHC services is dependent on the strength, capacity and capability of the health workforce. We call on Member States to adopt the policy priorities of the recently released WHO Global Strategic Directions for Nursing and Midwifery and the complementary WHO Euro Roadmap for Nursing and Midwifery. We also urge Member States to adopt incentives that attract, train and retain nurses and midwives. This includes removal of barriers that prevent them from working to their full scope of practice and that will allow for quality “fit-for-purpose” PHC.

Strengthening PHC will require establishing functional multidisciplinary teams. We firmly support the need to enable greater autonomy for nurses and midwives by enabling their scope of practice, investing in interprofessional learning and governance models. Furthermore, there is a need to redefine responsibilities within team-based care to reflect the increasing recognition of advanced and autonomous nursing and midwifery practice that will continue to evolve as the health needs of individuals and communities change.

Finally, we call on Member States to actively involve nurses and midwives in PHC governance mechanisms to ensure greater responsiveness and nursing leadership for regional and local needs.



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.

The **European Forum of National Nurses and Midwives Associations** (European Forum - EFNNMA) is the joint voice of nursing and midwifery in the WHO European Region and was established to promote the continuous development of the nursing and midwifery professions in all Member States in the region in collaboration with the WHO Regional Office.