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Provisional agenda item 9.8

Strengthening health workforce education and training in the Region (SEA/RC67/R6)

5-9 September 2022 (Paro, Bhutan)

Honourable Chair, Distinguished Delegates,

The International Council of Nurses (ICN) acknowledges the World Health Organization South-East Asia report on 'Strengthening health workforce education and training in the Region.' We support the aim of improving the education and training of the health workforce to meet the health needs of individuals and communities throughout the region. Universal Health Coverage (UHC) can only be achieved through strong health systems and health workers who are educated and empowered to provide the health services that populations need.

South-East Asia is home to over a quarter of the world's population and requires a significant increase in the number of nurses to achieve UHC. Current estimates demonstrate that by 2030, an additional two million nurses will be required to provide minimum levels of UHC. Education is a fundamental element of building the nursing workforce. However, currently the South-East Asia region has only 12.2 nursing graduates per 100,000 population. This is considered a low level of graduation rates compared to other WHO regions. The State of the World's Nursing report also shows that the South-East Asia region has lower levels of regulation for education programmes, fewer continuing professional development systems, and fewer national associations for pre-licensure students or standards for interprofessional education compared to other WHO Regions.

Over the last three years, the pandemic has clearly shown the world the complex critical thinking that nurses employ in performance of their services in caring for patients. Nurses are scientific professionals whose practices are evidence informed. To address current challenges and the increasing health demands of our populations, adapting to new treatments and technologies and collaborating across the various sectors, it is essential that nurses have solid educational foundations. This includes undergraduate degrees, post-graduate degrees and continuing professional development.

ICN supports competency-based education (CBE) as a means to improve the quality of education. CBE is an outcomes-based approach that situates the knowledge and skills gained in the context of practice and the health services provided, thus emphasizing the mastery of learning to the required performance standard. CBE is associated with better preparedness for practice, learner engagement, and health worker performance, with the potential to improve health outcomes of the populations that health workers serve.

ICN and members advocate for patients across the world, calling on Member States to:

- Adopt and implement the actions outlined in the WHO Global Strategic Directions for Nursing and Midwifery



- Adopt and implement the WHO “Global Competency and Outcomes Framework for Universal Health Coverage”
- Review and implement the ICN’s International Nurses Day report ‘Nurses: A Voice to Lead – Invest in nursing and respect rights to secure global health’. This report acts as a strategic toolkit to support the implementation of the above documents.

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.