



MONTREAL
ICN CONGRESS
1-5 JULY 2023
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WHO D.G. makes major announcement during ICN Congress: new State of the World's Nursing report for 2025

Montreal, Canada; 03 July 2023 – World Health Organization Director General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus chose his speech to ICN Congress in Montreal, Canada, to make a major announcement about the launch of the second State of the World's Nursing (SOWN) report.

Dr Tedros said action is needed to address the global shortage of nurses by investing in nursing education, employment and retention.

Before announcing the new SOWN report, which is due to be launched in 2025, Dr Tedros thanked ICN for its strong support and the progress being made in advancing the Global Strategic Direction for Nursing and Midwifery 2021-2025.

“I am so pleased that WHO will collaborate with ICN and others on the State of the World's Nursing report for 2025. This is our second such report, and it's really needed. I urge all of you to work through your organisations to support and advocate for your country's efforts to share robust data, on which this critical report depends. The engagement of ICN and Nursing Now really made a huge difference on the inaugural report, allowing us to use data from 191 countries.”

ICN President Dr Pamela Cipriano said: “ICN has long been lobbying WHO to start data collection on a second State of the World's Nursing report so that we can have an accurate view of the current nursing workforce in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“We have seen anecdotally the impact the pandemic has had on the nursing workforce, whether by person experience or in the effects we have seen it have on our colleagues and loved ones. Finally we will be able to accurately describe the effects of the pandemic on the size of the workforce and see where it has been most affected by the effects of COVID-19 infection. I am sure that all our National Nursing Associations will do all they can to get access to the vital data we need to make informed decisions about the long-term workforce planning that is needed to bring the nursing workforce back up to full strength.”

ICN Chief Executive Officer Howard Catton said it is important for National Nursing Associations (NNAs) in every country to play an active role in the collection and scrutiny of accurate workforce data, to ensure it properly reflects the situation on the ground.

With a six-million shortage of nurses revealed in the first SOWN report, Mr Catton said NNAs must be vigilant and ensure that countries do not use the substitution of registered nurses with nursing support, aide or assistant-type roles as a quick-fix solution for their registered nurse shortages.

Mr Catton said: “Based on what you, our member associations, have been telling us, we need to be on high alert for the global dilution of the registered nursing workforce: we know that would be a threat to global patient safety. Because the hard evidence is unambiguous: registered nurse substitution and dilution will increase the risk of health harms to patients, including increased deaths.

“It is therefore critically important that when we report the numbers of registered nurses in a country, we are in fact counting registered nurses, and separating them from other nursing support roles so that we do not artificially inflate the number of registered nurses. This must now become a priority for ICN and for all our associations. Today we can celebrate the announcement, when we go home, we must roll our sleeves up and get on with the work.”

In his video message, Dr Tedros acknowledged ICN for its close collaboration and praised nurses for their work during the pandemic. He also spoke of the need for nurses to engage on vital issues,

including fair pay, decent, safe and respectful working conditions, and on how to improve leadership, educational and career opportunities for nurses everywhere.

Dr Tedros said: "It is truly an honour to address the largest gathering of nurses in the world, a coming together of organisations representing 29 million nurses from around the globe. Although I am not with you physically, I am with you in spirit."

He said the past three years highlighted how much societies depend on their health and care workers, and that although he had declared the end of COVID-19 as an international health emergency, its impacts were still being felt.

"The lesson is clear: we need to work across sectors to invest and protect our nurses and other health workers. Safe staffing, with adequate numbers of nurses, must be a priority, both to maintain high quality care, and to ensure patient safety."

At the end of his speech Dr Tedros invited nurses everywhere to engage with other nurses, partners and stakeholders across the world, using WHO's virtual platform the Nursing and Midwifery Global Community of Practice.

The ICN Congress is currently taking place in Montreal, Canada, from 1-5 July 2023

For more information go to <https://icncongress2023.org/> or follow us on social media: #ICNCongress #ICN2023 @ICNurses

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Note to Editors

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 care for all and sound health policies globally.

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