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Health Workforce. Item 14. WPR/RC74/8

Honourable Chair, distinguished representatives, esteemed colleagues,

The International Council of Nurses (ICN) commends the development of the draft Regional Framework to Shape a Health Workforce for the Future of the Western Pacific.

The current vulnerabilities in our health system due to chronic underinvestment, the evident gaps in distribution, numbers and quality of health workers are concerning. We cannot achieve universal health coverage without addressing these issues. ICN strongly supports the call for strategic investments in the health workforce, viewing such expenditures as investments, not costs.

Drawing from our recent report, 'Recover to Rebuild – Investing in the nursing workforce for health system effectiveness', ICN reiterates the increasing evidence of the debilitating challenges confronting the nursing workforce. The adverse impacts of stress and burnout and the prevailing poor working conditions, violence in the workplace and unsafe staffing levels have become glaringly evident and necessitate immediate attention. Without substantive investment in well-prepared nurses, effective health care system recovery and rebuild remain elusive.

The ICN Charter for Change lays out 10 imperative policy actions for governments and employers that are pivotal to sculpting health care systems that are robust, affordable, accessible and responsive, ensuring nurses are central, recognized and indispensable to the health of our nations.

ICN endorses the Regional Framework, and we emphasize further actions, namely:

1. Implement the recommendations highlighted in ICN's 2023 reports – 'Recover to Rebuild' and 'Charter for Change' which focus on protecting nurses, strengthening health systems and ensuring resilient recovery.
2. Implement and report on the recommendations outlined in the WHO Global Strategic Directions for Nursing and Midwifery and support the proposed development of the second WHO State of the World's Nursing report.

3. Leverage ICN's resources and insights. Our commitment is to the global advancement of nursing, and our recent reports offer valuable insights.
4. Establish a Chief Nurse position at WHO WPRO and a Government Chief Nurse in every country in the Western Pacific, ensuring dedicated nursing leadership at national levels.

ICN urges all stakeholders present to acknowledge the undeniable value of the nursing workforce and to pledge their commitment to the transformative actions needed to ensure the health and well-being of populations globally.

Thank you.

Links

- ICN 2023 Recover to Rebuild: Investing in the nursing workforce for health system effectiveness - https://www.icn.ch/sites/default/files/2023-07/ICN_Recover-to-Rebuild_report_EN.pdf
- ICN 2023 Charter for Change - https://www.icn.ch/sites/default/files/2023-07/ICN_IND_2023_Report_EN.pdf