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What's on today – Tuesday 19 May

The Plenary will open today at 09:00 with the address by Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General.

Committee A will open this morning and continue discussion on Item 13.3 Open-ended Intergovernmental Working Group on the WHO Pandemic Agreement.

Important items on the agenda scheduled for today:

- **13.1** Report of the Independent Oversight and Advisory Committee for the WHO Health Emergencies Programme
- **13.2** Implementation of the International Health Regulations (2005)
- **14.1** WHO's work in health emergencies
- **14.2** Strengthening the evidence base for public health and social measures

Please consult the [Daily Journal No.2](#) for today.

Sunday 17 May and Monday 18 May Highlights

Sunday 17 May

WHO #WalktheTalk

ICN President José Luis Cobos Serrano and 1st Vice President Sineva Ribeiro connected with WHO Director General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus at the WHO *Walk the Talk: Health for All* Challenge, which celebrates the importance of healthy lifestyles and provides a platform to advocate for the importance of Health for All on the eve of the World Health Assembly.



World Health Professions Alliance Leadership Gathering

ICN CEO & World Health Professions Alliance Chair Howard Catton hosted the WHPA Leadership Gathering at the President Wilson Hotel, along with the ICN President and the 1st Vice President.

WHA Lunch seminar

Sineva Ribeiro joined the WHA Lunch seminar, “From Dialogue to Action: Co-creating the next steps for civil society in global health promotion”, organized by the Alliance for Health Promotion.

Taiwan Smart Medical & Health Tech Expo

ICN CEO Howard Catton attended the opening of this expo, which focuses on advances in digital health through AI-powered telemedicine, big data, and smart medicine.

Acute Care Action Network

ICN Senior Policy Advisor Hoi Shan Fokeladeh attended the “Acute Care Action Network mid-year” meeting, hosted by American Heart Association, the Laerdal Foundation and Operation Smile.

The WHO Acute Care Action Network (ACAN) held its mid-year meeting at the ICRC Museum on 17 May 2026, marking the second in-person convening of the



Network, hosted by ACAN partner organizations. ACAN is a global alliance of key stakeholders committed to saving millions of lives by advancing acute care through collaboration, in support of the mandate set out in WHA Resolution 76.2. Its participant organizations work across primary, emergency, critical, and operative care, united by a shared objective: strengthening acute care delivery in low- and middle-income countries through the dissemination, implementation, and evaluation of WHO tools and resources. The meeting brought partners together to review progress across ACAN’s four working groups and to discuss priorities and the way forward for the Network.

Social media highlights



Monday 18 May

The 79th World Health Assembly opened in Geneva, Switzerland, with the election of Dr Víctor Elías Atallah Lajam of the Dominican Republic as the President of the Health Assembly.

WHO Director-General's Opening Remarks

WHO Director-General, Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, delivered high-level [opening remarks](#) setting the strategic direction for WHA79 and highlighting the urgent need to strengthen global health systems amid multiple crises, including Ebola and Hantavirus outbreaks, major disruptions caused by funding cuts, and the ongoing impact of conflict, climate impacts, economic pressures. He emphasized: “From conflicts to economic crises to climate change and aid cuts, we live in difficult, dangerous and divisive times”. At the same time, Dr Tedros emphasized that this moment presents an opportunity to reshape global health through stronger cooperation, equity, and country leadership.

Dr Tedros’s messages, and the tragic news of health worker lives lost in Ebola health emergencies this week, emphasize the urgent need to support, protect and empower nursing and health workforces for preparedness, response, recovery, and global health security.

Committee A and B discussions

Committee A opened on Monday 18 May at 18:45 and began discussion on agenda sub-item 13.3 *Open-ended Intergovernmental Working Group on the WHO Pandemic Agreement*. The meeting closed at 21:40 and the agenda item was suspended.

ICN and WHO co-hosted side event “Strengthening Nursing for Global Health”

ICN co-hosted an impactful side event with WHO at ICN Headquarters. Speakers included WHO Chief Nursing Officer Amelia Latu Afuhaamango Tuipulotu, the ICN President, 1st Vice President and CEO, and several WHO leaders across the WHO Academy, Health Workforce Policies, and Collaborating Centres. The event reinforced the central role of nurses in advancing global health priorities and confirmed ICN and WHO’s strong continued partnership across the global health agenda. This includes accelerating the implementation of the *Global Strategic Directions for*

Nursing and Midwifery, which ICN helped to shape and advocated to extend to 2030; continuing to use data from the vitally important *State of the World's Nursing 2025* report which ICN advocated for and co-chaired; and strengthening practical collaboration.



Topics included:

- Structural empowerment at all levels: global, national association (including National Nurses Association), and individual nurses. Empowered nurses save lives!
- Urgent importance of empowering nurse leadership, ensuring representation of nurses in decision-making, and strengthening Chief Nursing Officer roles globally.
- Strong messages calling for the safety and security of health workers in conflict settings and urgent protection for those who protect our communities worldwide.
- Discussions on the full scope and scale of ICN's work with WHO, including vital policy, advocacy, technical and practical work across patient safety, primary health care, mental health, pandemic preparedness, international recruitment, health worker protection, and the economic power of care.
- Important messages from WHO Chief Nursing Officer and WHO colleagues and leaders, reaffirming WHO's commitment to strengthening nursing

workforces as the path to health for all, and concrete programmes and work including the WHO Academy, Collaborating Centres, and Nursing and Midwifery Global Community of Practice.

The event also featured powerful interventions from nurse leaders and health leaders from around the world, highlighting both urgent concerns around retention, working conditions, inequitable recruitment practices, and migration, and practical actions to strengthen the nursing voice, influence and workforce in global health.

“Strategic leadership for Nurses and Midwives: a policy pathway to stronger health systems”

Led by the G4 Alliance and co-hosted by ICN and other partners, this session featuring the ICN President and attended by Senior Policy Advisor Erica Burton, highlighted, through conversation, impact stories and case studies, how leadership by nurses and midwives in policy and decision-making drives progress for priority health outcomes.

Dr José Luis Cobos Serrano and Prof. Jaqueline Dunkley Bent, ICM Chief Midwife discussed together on a panel how nursing and midwifery leadership structures at the national, ministerial, district, and facility levels support health system strengthening, including workforce development, education and training, and safe, high-quality service delivery.

The session identified actionable policy and governance mechanisms that embed nursing and midwifery participation in decision-making processes at all levels, highlighting national executive and organizational and unit levels, to support sustainable health system performance

Digital Health Forum: AI Governance and Digital Health Innovation

Sineva Ribeiro and ICN's Head of Digital and Sponsorship Pilar Millan attended the session at the Taiwan Smart Medical & Health Tech Expo which featured around 30 representatives from Taiwanese



hospitals, medical technology companies, and health information enterprises. This event highlighted Taiwan's latest achievements in AI governance, clinical AI implementation, digital medicine, and smart healthcare innovation.

" From Global Strategy to Country Impact: Scaling Emergency, Critical and Operative Care"

Hoi Shan Fokeladeh joined this official WHA79 side event that explored how global commitments on acute care can be translated into tangible national action. Specifically, it aimed to demonstrate how WHO Resolution 76.2 and the WHO Global Strategy for Integrated Emergency, Critical and Operative Care can be put into practice at country level, including through the support of the WHO Acute Care Action Network (ACAN).



Discussions showcased scalable models for strengthening acute care systems, among them the Basic Emergency Care programme and complementary initiatives, and highlighted practical approaches that countries can adapt to their own

contexts. The event also sought to catalyze dialogue on innovative financing, and explored how the adaptation and implementation of the Global Strategy and the forthcoming Global Action Plan can be sustainably resourced.

“Financing the Future: Investing in Health Workforces for Economic Resilience and Universal Health Coverage (UHC)”

Erica Burton attended this side event hosted by the World Medical Association (WMA) which highlighted the economic and societal returns of investing in health systems and the health workforce and explored policy pathways to align health financing with UHC and sustainable development. The multidisciplinary panel of health, finance, and policy stakeholders fostered dialogue between these important stakeholders to identify concrete actions to integrate workforce investment into global and national financing strategies. Nurses and the nursing workforce were mentioned on a number of occasions throughout the session. The session noted the important role of professional associations in the era of declining institutional trust, investing in adaptive capability of health workers, and the critical need for AI stewardship.

Bilateral meetings

ICN President José Luis Cobos Serrano, accompanied by Hoi Shan Fokeladeh met with **Annastacia Jordan, Government Chief Nursing Officer of Barbados**, to discuss advancing advanced practice nursing (APN) across the Caribbean region. Key priorities included defining the APN role by skill set and strengthening nursing education. Regional health challenges discussed included NCDs, mental health, adolescent health, and ageing populations.

They also met with **H.E. Prof. Im Sethikar, Secretary of State, Ministry of Health, and Mrs. Prak Manila of Cambodia**. The discussion centred on the nursing profession in Cambodia and current efforts to advance it, with both parties sharing a common vision for the profession and reflecting on ongoing developments in nursing education.



ICN President José Luis Cobos Serrano (second right), accompanied by ICN's Senior Policy Adviser (right), met with H.E. Prof. Im Sethikar (second left), Secretary of State, Ministry of Health, and Mrs. Prak Manila (left) of Cambodia.

Social media highlights

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