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Provisional agenda Item 8

Progress report on the framework for the implementation of the Immunization Agenda 2030 in the WHO African Region (AFR-RC76-INF-DOC-5)

The International Council of Nurses (ICN), the global federation of National Nurses' Associations and the voice of nursing internationally, welcomes the Africa Health Workforce Agenda 2026–2035 and its Plan–Train–Retain approach, as well as its alignment with the Africa Health Workforce Investment Charter and its recognition of labour market imbalances, including unemployment alongside shortages.

ICN acknowledges progress in the African Region, with the health workforce increasing from 1.6 million in 2013 to 5.72 million in 2024 and density rising to nearly 29.96 health professionals per 10,000 population. However, ICN remains deeply concerned that the region still faces a projected shortage of up to 6.1 million health workers by 2030, alongside unemployment of 27% overall and up to 69% among new graduates, reflecting a structural mismatch between education, employment, and retention.

ICN urges Member States to prioritize retention and job creation as central pillars of workforce investment. Expansion of education must be matched with funded employment, fair remuneration, safe staffing, violence-free workplaces, and clear career pathways. Nurses must be enabled to practise to full scope, supported by regulation, competency-based education, and continuous professional development.

ICN supports strengthened labour market intelligence, fiscal planning, and fully costed national investment plans, integrated into health budgets and informed by reliable data. Equitable rural deployment must be supported through evidence-based staffing and incentives.

ICN also stresses alignment with the WHO Global Code on ethical recruitment, strengthening domestic self-sufficiency and reducing avoidable migration. National Nursing Associations and chief nursing officers must be fully engaged in governance, implementation, and evaluation.

ICN also calls for National Nursing Associations and government chief nursing officers to be meaningfully engaged in implementation, monitoring and accountability. Member States can draw on ICN's International Nurses Day reports, including The Economic Power of Care and Empowered Nurses Save Lives, and Sustain and Retain in 2022 and Beyond to guide sustainable workforce investment and retention.