

Seventy-ninth Session of the WHO Regional Committee for South-East Asia

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Agenda item 8.6

Establishment of the South-East Asia Digital Health and Artificial Intelligence Collaborative Network (SEA-DAC)

As the largest professional group in the health workforce, nurses interact with digital systems across virtually every level of care; their involvement is therefore essential to successful digital transformation. Digital systems must be designed with the people who use them. Poorly implemented technologies can add administrative burden and divert nurses from direct care, while meaningful nursing involvement in design, testing, implementation and evaluation helps ensure that technology supports safe, people-centred care. Artificial intelligence raises the stakes further, offering real gains in clinical decision support and education, alongside real risks: bias, over-reliance, erosion of professional judgement and widening digital divides between and within Member States.

ICN therefore calls for formal nursing representation in SEA-DAC's governance and technical workstreams, including through Chief Nursing and Midwifery Officers or equivalent government nursing leaders and engagement with national nurses associations; for digital health, data and AI competencies to be integrated into nursing education and continuing professional development, with specialist nursing informatics capacity developed where needed; for co-design with frontline clinicians to be a stated principle of the Network; and for clear ethical and governance safeguards on AI, including human oversight, transparency and explainability, accountability, data protection, equity, and evaluation of impacts on patient safety, care quality and health-worker workload before scale-up.

ICN brings practical experience to this agenda: its newly launched Learning Hub makes global nursing education and evidence accessible to nurses everywhere, including through a dedicated learning track on digital innovation and artificial intelligence. This experience illustrates the potential of accessible, scalable

learning platforms to strengthen digital and AI capability across the nursing workforce.

The Region has an opportunity to lead globally by building its digital and AI future together with its health workforce. ICN and its member associations offer their nursing expertise to the Network from its first day.