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Item 5(c) Strategy to promote the health and well-being of refugees, migrants, internally displaced populations and other displaced groups in the Eastern Mediterranean Region

The International Council of Nurses (ICN), representing over 30 million nurses worldwide, welcomes the progress report on this strategy. As displacement and migration increase, so does demand on nurses, who remain at the front line of health service provision.

This demand is rising when nursing workforce shortages are most severe in many fragile, resource-constrained settings where displaced populations are concentrated. WHO's State of the World's Nursing 2025 projects a global nursing shortage of 4.1 million by 2030, with the African and Eastern Mediterranean regions bearing nearly 70% of this shortage. Without a sufficient, well-supported nursing workforce, this strategy cannot succeed.

ICN notes that Objective 3, addressing the social determinants of health, remains the least advanced and stresses that nursing leadership must be central to closing this gap. Nurses are well positioned to expand access to care, maintain continuity of essential services and respond to social determinants.

Barriers to access remain widespread, including legal and administrative constraints, resource limitations, discrimination, fear and unfamiliar health systems. Nurse-led models of care can help overcome these barriers, but realizing their potential requires sustained investment. Nurses must be resourced, protected and retained to deliver culturally responsive, person-centred care and help lead health system responses to displacement.

ICN urges governments to uphold universal and equitable access to health services for all, without discrimination based on migration or legal status, and to invest in nursing workforce capacity, retention and leadership. Nurses providing care in humanitarian and conflict settings must themselves be protected and supported.

Nurses and National Nurses Associations must be meaningfully involved in planning, implementing and evaluating this strategy. ICN continues to support nurses affected by conflict and humanitarian emergencies through its Nurses for Peace initiative. Protecting and investing in the nursing workforce is essential to protecting the right to health and advancing this strategy.