

73 rd Session of the WHO Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean, 13–15 October 2026

Item 5(n) Promoting collaborative action to accelerate the response to antimicrobial resistance in the Eastern Mediterranean Region

The International Council of Nurses (ICN), representing over 30 million nurses worldwide, welcomes this report and its five strategic priority areas: governance; infection prevention; access to essential health services; health emergencies and resilience; and strategic information through surveillance and research. Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) remains one of the most serious threats to global health, jeopardizing progress in treating common infections and undermining the safety of essential health services.

Shortfalls in functional infection prevention and control (IPC) structures, trained staff, surveillance, essential infrastructure and supplies continue to limit IPC across the Region. Countries must strengthen national IPC programmes, expand vaccination coverage to prevent infections and reduce antibiotic use, and integrate AMR into pre- and in-service health workforce education.

ICN advocates for competency-based, context-sensitive AMR education for nurses that addresses infection prevention and antimicrobial stewardship. This should be embedded in national action plans, health workforce strategies, continuing professional development, accreditation mechanisms and pre-service education.

Nurses, as the largest occupational group in health, are central to preventing and addressing AMR. They assess and monitor patients, administer antimicrobials, prescribe where authorized within their scope of practice, deliver vaccination, implement IPC practices, monitor treatment outcomes, and educate patients, families and communities on appropriate antimicrobial use.

ICN urges Member States to include nurses and nursing organizations in developing AMR policies and stewardship plans, not only their implementation. Nurses should be formally represented in IPC and antimicrobial stewardship programmes and committees and have the education, resources and authority within their scope of practice to act on stewardship concerns.

As AMR disproportionately affects vulnerable populations, countries must invest in equitable, resilient health systems and a well-supported health workforce, including in resource-constrained, conflict-affected and humanitarian settings. This requires reliable water, sanitation, essential supplies and protective equipment to enable safe IPC practice.

ICN stands ready to support Member States and WHO in strengthening nursing leadership and capacity in this agenda.