

Pan American Health Organization, 63rd Directing Council

September 28 –2 October 2026

Item 8.3 Strategy and Plan of Action to Improve Quality of Care in Health Service

Delivery 2020–2025: Final Report

I speak on behalf of the International Council of Nurses (ICN), representing over 30 million nurses worldwide.

Nurses are the largest segment of the health workforce and present across all levels and settings, making them indispensable to any strategy for improving quality. The report's findings reinforce what ICN has long emphasized: strengthening the first level of care depends on an adequately staffed, trained and supported nursing workforce. Nurses are central to the strategic lines in this report, including infection prevention and control, patient safety, adverse event surveillance, and the rational use of medicines and health technologies.

ICN is concerned that targets for adverse events, patient satisfaction, and safe water and sanitation in health facilities were not achieved. Progress in these is linked to health professional working conditions, including safe staffing, supportive practice environments and resources needed for evidence-based practice. Nursing-sensitive measures of quality and safety should be systematically reflected in future monitoring frameworks, recognizing nursing care as critical to patient safety and health outcomes.

ICN also draws attention to the only two countries have regulatory frameworks advancing universal access to quality, safe and affordable medicines, and that just ten countries and territories have accreditation systems incorporating interprofessional education and graduate competencies. Strengthening nursing education, regulation and accreditation should be treated as a core component of quality improvement, alongside enabling nurses to maintain and develop competencies to deliver safe, high-quality care.

ICN supports the report's proposed measures to accelerate progress, particularly strengthening training and continuing education for health workers, implementing

measurable service level operational plans, and promoting ethical and appropriate use of digital tools and artificial intelligence in care delivery. We urge Member States to ensure that nurses are engaged as full partners in designing and implementing the next phase of this work. Investment in the nursing workforce is recognized as foundational to achieving sustained, equitable quality of care across the Region.

Delivered by Sarah E. Gray