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Health Emergency Preparedness in the WHO Euro Region

The International Council of Nurses and the European Forum of National Nurses and Midwives Associations strongly support the consultation process to develop health emergency preparedness, response and resilience in the WHO Euro Region.

Nurses and midwives are critical to health emergency response as evidenced by the COVID-19 pandemic and the Ukraine conflict. Nurses, midwives and health workers have had to directly deal with the consequences of lack of pandemic preparedness. The pandemic has revealed the lack of investment in the health workforce and many nurses and midwives are now suffering from mental health issues and burnout. Many of them are leaving their professions. The ongoing and worsening shortage of nurses and midwives is now the greatest threat to global and regional health. We call on governments to invest in strengthening their nursing workforce as an essential part of preparedness for and response to health emergencies.

As the largest groups of health professionals, nurses and midwives are critical to resilient health systems. We are extremely concerned by the increasing incidents of violence against healthcare in the region and urge Member States to step up efforts to protect health workers. As WHO Euro and Member States now develop a plan to deal with future health emergency preparedness, we also emphasize the importance of engaging nurse and midwife leaders and government chief nursing and midwifery officers in every step of the consultation process.

Thank you.

The **International Council of Nurses (ICN)** is a federation of more than 130 national nurses associations representing the millions of nurses worldwide. Operated by nurses and leading nursing internationally, ICN works to ensure quality nursing care for all and sound health policies globally.

The European Forum of National Nurses and Midwives Associations (European Forum - EFNNMA) is the joint voice of nursing and midwifery in the WHO European Region and was established to promote the continuous development of the nursing and midwifery professions in all Member States in the region in collaboration with the WHO Regional Office.