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Decade of Healthy Ageing

Development of a proposal for a Decade of Healthy Ageing 2020–2030

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of the International Council of Nurses (ICN) and the over 20 million nurses worldwide.

Now that virtually all countries are experiencing population ageing, urgent action is needed to align health systems to match the needs of older populations and support age-friendly environments and public health policies. ICN strongly supports the need for a paradigm shift around how we feel, think and act towards ageing and believes improving lives of older people should be seen as a key tool for health promotion, disease prevention and the overall holistic care of individuals. As strong patient advocates, nurses are key to preventing ageism and shifting attitudes through actions such as improving community health literacy related to healthy ageing.

Nurses are crucial to ensure integrated person-centred healthcare for older people through both a care and coordination function, ensuring that the right person is receiving the right care by the right person at the right time. Nurses also play an active role in the diagnosis and treatment of many conditions in the older person. Advanced practice nurses are often at the front line being the first point of contact and managing the disease process. Examples include geriatric nurse practitioners and primary care nurse practitioners.

With population ageing comes an ageing health workforce and many countries have already begun to see increases in shortages of health professionals and turnover rates. Investment in the nursing workforce and healthy working conditions will be instrumental to ensuring the availability of an adequate workforce to meet the needs of larger and older populations.

We thank WHO for including older people in the development of the draft proposal and encourage Member States to involve older persons when developing and implementing national plans as it will be necessary for effective action in the Decade.

Thank you.