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The International Council of Nurses welcomes WHO's new Competency Framework in World Health Worker Week

Geneva, Switzerland, 4 April 2022 – During this World Health Worker Week (4-8 April), the International Council of Nurses (ICN) celebrates the amazing work of nurses and all front line workers at this challenging time, and welcomes the publication of the World Health Organization's (WHO) new Global Competency and Outcomes Framework. The Framework, to which ICN contributed, reflects the true complexity of building a stronger health workforce that is well-educated to achieve universal health coverage (UHC). Competency-based training for nurses can transform educational programs with a focus on improving population and health outcomes. The framework will help guide governments to create their best possible nursing workforce, and be a useful tool to establish accurate data about Registered Nurses globally.

Speaking ahead of World Health Worker Week, ICN President Pamela Cipriano said: "This is the tenth World Health Worker Week, and it is an important opportunity for people everywhere to recognise the value of the contribution made by nurses and other healthcare workers to improving the health of our societies.

'This year it is particularly poignant to think of those we have lost during the pandemic, and of the terrible toll of the pressures nurses have been under in the past two years. Although the pandemic seems to be waning in many areas, COVID-19 is still with us, people are still getting sick and dying in large numbers, and nurses continue to endure the stress of heavy workloads, emotional and physical fatigue and strain on their overall well-being.

'The whole nursing workforce has been affected during this time, but uppermost in our minds at this time are the nurses who find themselves in the path of danger in Ukraine, in Myanmar and Afghanistan, and in other areas where people are suffering the terrible humanitarian costs of crises, conflicts and disasters. We all hope for a speedy resolution to these crisis situations so that nurses in these areas, and indeed the entire world, can return to a safer, more stable and sustainable way of life, with more normalised relationships between nations."

ICN applauds the new WHO Competency Framework, which is designed to ensure that the education of healthcare workers means they can meet the needs of the populations they serve. The competency-based model of education, which ICN has long been calling for, is in line with the current Strategic Directions for Nursing and Midwifery. It means nurse education globally will be values based and focused on the acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes, which will bring benefits including improved efficiency and efficacy of learning, improved preparedness of nursing students for practice, and, most importantly, better health outcomes for patients and communities.

ICN chief Executive Officer Howard Catton said: "I am extremely pleased to welcome the launch of the new Competency Framework, which demonstrates WHO's recognition of the complexity of nursing and the high-level decision making that Registered Nurses are engaged in every day.

'As the Framework clearly demonstrates, nurses are professionals with a broad scope of practice working in all areas of healthcare. Their roles and responsibilities cannot be safely shifted to a less skilled workforce. The evidence is clear, when health care services have safe staffing levels, with

the right skill mix and education levels, patients have better outcomes; health systems save money; and the staff are more satisfied. High quality health systems are built on the foundation of a highly educated workforce, not by task shifting. Investing in nurses and their education is an investment in quality care.

‘Let’s be clear the global events these past two years, exacerbated by what has happened in Ukraine over the past two months, will make decisions about investing in nursing education, jobs and leadership harder. But health is a global issue that is intimately linked to our general and economic wellbeing. I have said it before, but when governments say they cannot afford to invest in nursing, I say, they simply cannot afford not to because health security is part and parcel of global security.”

David Stewart, ICN’s Associate Director (Consultant) Nursing and Health Policy, has written a commentary on how ICN’s expertise contributed to the new Competency framework, which you can read [here](#).

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Note to Editors

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 care for all and sound health policies globally.

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