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World Health Professions Alliance calls on G20 to protect health workers facing COVID-19

Geneva, Switzerland, 9 April 2020 - The World Health Professions Alliance (WHPA), including the International Council of Nurses, has written an [open letter](#) to the G20 leaders calling for coordinated action to ensure the security of the supply chain of personal protective equipment (PPE) for all health professionals and healthcare workers on the frontline against COVID-19. The letter called on the G20 to “take immediate and adequate steps to reactivate and ensure the supply chains for PPE with speed and consistency through manufacturing, customs, procurement, and delivery.”

The alliance of nurses, pharmacists, physical therapists, dentists and doctors called for the world’s leaders “to put geopolitics to one side to secure the global PPE supply chain before we lose more staff and, consequently, more patients.”

Annette Kennedy, President of the International Council of Nurses (ICN) said:

“It is time for political leaders to step up in the same way as health workers have been stepping up to provide care, at the risk of their own health and lives, to fight COVID-19. We need multilateralism and cooperation to ensure nurses and other frontline workers get the protection they need to continue to deliver essential care to patients in very difficult conditions.’

‘We urge G20 leaders to look to creative solutions, including investing in manufacturing in multiple countries to increase the supply of PPE. Manufacturers too have to reach out across borders and work together to solve the current PPE supply chain crisis.’

ICN CEO, Howard Catton said, “ICN first called out the need to secure the PPE supply chain at the beginning of the year in the face of growing concerns around COVID-19, and although there have been some improvements, what we are now seeing is rising infection rates, and tragically more deaths amongst frontline nurses, even in countries with relatively strong health systems. We are now starting to see the virus emerge in Africa and Latin America and we are receiving reports from all regions that some nurses are anxious and frightened to go work because they lack PPE.’

‘G20 please do not self-isolate in your political leadership, applauding nurses is all well and good, but you are in a unique position to coordinate and ensure the proper manufacturer and distribution of PPE. You owe this to all the nurses and healthcare workers you rightly call heroes.’

Otmar Kloiber, President of the World Medical Association, said:

“The letter is a strong appeal to the leaders of the biggest economies to do more to help those who are caring for the ill and the weak in this pandemic. It is also a strong demand for solidarity with smaller and weaker economies, not to forget their people during this crisis.”

In the [open letter](#) released on 9 April 2020 the five organisations, which together represent more than 31 million health care professionals across the globe, said that international cooperation would also assist lower-income countries with less resources to access the vital equipment needed to protect their health workforce. "In the face of a global pandemic, there is no room for national egos," they concluded.

Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director General of the World Health Organization, has said that "The chronic, global shortage of personal protective equipment is one of the most urgent threats to our collective ability to save lives."

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Note to Editors

The World Health Professions Alliance (WHPA) is a unique alliance of the International Council of Nurses (ICN), the International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP), the World Confederation for Physical Therapy (WCPT), World Dental Federation (FDI) and the World Medical Association (WMA). WHPA addresses global health issues striving to help deliver cost effective, quality health care worldwide. Together, the partners of the WHPA include more than 600 national member organisations, making WHPA the key point of global access to health care professionals within the five disciplines. www.whpa.org

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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