



Press Information . Communiqué de presse . Comunicado de prensa

WHO DG and ICN Board meet to discuss strengthening collaboration to support both nurses and health systems globally

Geneva, Switzerland, 14 May 2020 – The World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Council of Nurses (ICN) have agreed to deepen and strengthen collaboration on shared priorities, including addressing the worldwide shortage of nurses, protecting the health of the nursing workforce - highlighted during the present pandemic - and increasing access to healthcare.

During a private briefing session of the ICN Board of Directors on 12 May, International Nurses Day, WHO Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus also expressed his solidarity and admiration for nurses and the way they were tackling the COVID-19 pandemic:

“I would like to wish all the nurses around the world a very happy International Nurses Day and, on behalf of WHO, extend my heartfelt thanks to all the world’s nurses: I am sure Florence Nightingale would have been proud of all the heroic work that nurses are doing.”

Dr Tedros said the COVID-19 pandemic has reminded the world that nurses are putting themselves at risk to alleviate suffering and save lives, often in less than ideal situations.

“The pandemic has shown the stark reality of shortages of basic equipment that even healthcare workers in high income countries are facing. We must advocate to ensure occupational safety and health for all nurses and ensure that they have access to PPE, mental health support, health insurance and much more. One of the lessons the world must learn from COVID-19 is that investing in nurses and midwives is an investment in health for all.”

At the Board meeting, Dr Tedros, who was joined by WHO Chief Nursing Officer, Elizabeth Iro, received a briefing from ICN Board members about how nurses are dealing with the pandemic around the world, and agreed to continue and deepen collaboration with ICN. Dr Tedros said WHO and ICN shared many of the same concerns, including the global nursing shortage, the health and welfare of nursing staff, the dire shortage of personal protective equipment, the importance of collecting data about healthcare worker infections and deaths, and the contribution of nurse leaders to healthcare policy at the highest level.

ICN President Annette Kennedy said the support of Dr Tedros was invaluable to the nursing profession.

“Dr Tedros has always recognised the value of nurses and ensured that they are listened to at the highest level in the WHO. That has not always been the case, and it is refreshing that he sees what we all see: that nurses are a vital force within healthcare wherever and whenever it is delivered. The appointment of Elizabeth Iro as the first Chief Nursing Officer should be an example followed by countries across the world.”

Ms Kennedy said the pandemic has increased solidarity in the global nursing family and provided opportunities for the sharing of vital information that should help to reduce its impact.

“Countries that experienced COVID-19 have been sharing their experiences with the countries that are going through it at a later stage. The most important lesson that all countries must learn is to be prepared for the next wave, for the next pandemic, so that we never again have to face such a dangerous and destructive virus without sufficient protective equipment to enable every nurse to go to work without worrying that they might not come home safe again.”

In the meeting, Dr Tedros agreed that the recently published WHO/ICN [State of the World's Nursing](#) report is an important accomplishment and that regular monitoring, updating and reporting on the nursing workforce will continue to be a priority for the future.

He suggested that WHO and ICN issue a joint statement of support and appreciation to nurses in all countries and regions of the world. The statement would also highlight the two organisations shared priorities and issues for continued collaboration to move forward on the road to healthcare for all.

Dr Tedros also invited ICN to jointly unveil a commemorative statue of Florence Nightingale that will be in the centre of a new WHO building in Geneva.

ICN Chief Executive Officer Howard Catton said:

“ICN works closely with many experts throughout WHO on a wide range of issues, including the current pandemic, and knowing that we have strong support and leadership from the Director-General means that our work together has a real impact for both nurses and the people they serve.

‘Global cooperation is key to addressing the health challenges that we face and strong partnerships at global, regional and country level are key to designing and delivering health systems that are accessible to all, of high quality and sustainable. With the support of the WHO we want to ensure that nurses are recognised as leaders in every country and every health system in the world. Only this way will healthcare for all become a reality.’

* * *

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.

ICN's Board is composed of ICN President Annette Kennedy and 13 other members from different nations, who are elected to represent nurses and nursing worldwide.

For more information please contact Gyorgy Madarasz, Press Officer at madarasz@icn.ch
Tel: +41 22 908 01 16

www.icn.ch
[@ICNurses](https://www.instagram.com/ICNurses)