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## **ICN welcomes WHO's new nursing strategy and calls on all countries to adopt it immediately to avert a looming global health crisis**

**Geneva, Switzerland, 28 May 2021** – The International Council of Nurses (ICN) applauds the World Health Assembly (WHA) for adopting a new Global Strategic Directions for Nursing and Midwifery 2021–2025 (SDNM) and urges nations to implement its recommendations as soon as possible.

The World Health Assembly, the governing body of the World Health Organization (WHO), adopted the SDNM at its 74<sup>th</sup> meeting, which is being held virtually from its headquarters in Geneva.

The SDNM addresses many of the issues that ICN has campaigned on over the past 18 months, including the ongoing global shortage of at least six million nurses, the need for investment in nursing jobs, education, leadership and practice, nurses' safety in the face of the pandemic, and the vital importance of establishing Government-level Chief Nurses in every one of WHO's member states.

ICN President Annette Kennedy said:

“This global strategy has never been more important, and we must implement it and take the actions forward. Unless governments and all stakeholders act now, the current situation, with nurses being overworked, underpaid and undervalued will continue, with potentially disastrous consequences for us all.

‘Nurses are the lifeblood of health systems everywhere, and they must be recognised for what they are - a precious commodity that needs to be nurtured and protected. The pandemic has shown the world how valuable nurses are to the health of nations: it is now up to each nation to show its nurses just how much they are valued by investing in nursing jobs, education, leadership and practice.’”

ICN Chief Executive Officer Howard Catton added:

“This is the first time that a nursing strategy has been adopted on the floor of the WHA during its annual meeting, and it sends a clear message to governments that cannot be ignored. They must own the strategy and implement it.

‘Much of its content will be familiar to nurses everywhere because it echoes ICN's priorities since before and during the pandemic. While the SDNM states that the worldwide shortage of nurses stands at about six million, as determined by the [State of the World's Nursing report](#), ICN's own [research](#) suggests a further four million nurses will retire over the next decade, and the cumulative influence of the mass traumatising caused by the COVID Effect, could see a further two or three million leaving the profession over the same period.

‘Governments must take drastic action to train, educate and recruit millions more nurses now, to safeguard our future healthcare systems. No government can afford to ignore the plain fact that investing in nursing is not a cost: it is an investment in all our futures.

‘To ensure that governments do own and implement the new strategy we need to ensure regular and transparent reporting on progress. We are pleased to see the commitment of governments to the strategy and ICN will work with its National Nurses Associations and Nursing Now groups to monitor and track progress.’

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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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