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## **ICN calls on G7 leaders to put nurses at the heart of a new pandemic treaty after WHO confirms 115,000 health and care workers have died from COVID-19 so far**

**Geneva, Switzerland, 2 June 2021** – The International Council of Nurses (ICN) says the enormity of this tragic death toll among healthcare workers requires swift and dramatic action from the leaders of the Group of Seven (G7) major advanced nations.

World Health Organization (WHO) Director General Dr Tedros confirmed the number of deaths among health and care workers at the recent World Health Assembly (WHA), which was held virtually from Geneva, Switzerland on 24-31 May 2021.

Speaking ahead of next week's G7 meeting in the United Kingdom, ICN Chief Executive Officer Howard Catton said:

“For nurses, this year's World Health Assembly meeting has been its most historic, for reasons that we will want to remember, but also for reasons that we must never forget.

‘In his opening address, Dr Tedros told us that at least 115,000 health and care workers have died as a result of contracting the corona virus. I'm not aware of any occasion when so many health and care workers have died as a result of a single disease. The death toll is the equivalent of more than 200 health and care workers dying every day since the start of the pandemic, but still, the reporting about infections and deaths is inadequate. Dr Tedros has said this lack of data is scandalous, and I agree with him: frankly, it's a disgrace.

‘However, this was also the first time that the Global Nursing and Midwifery Strategy was adopted unanimously on the floor of the World Health Assembly. And its message was crystal clear: we must invest now in nursing education, leadership, jobs and practice, and we need member states to own their new strategy and implement it now.

‘Of course, the tragic irony is that if we had done this before, we would have had a better protected healthcare workforce, and fewer of our colleagues would have died. That's why we must do all we can now to prevent this situation from ever happening again. I do believe that is possible, but we need our political leaders to show the same courageous, bold and brave leadership that nurses and other healthcare workers have shown throughout this pandemic.

‘And that is why ICN's President Annette Kennedy is writing to the G7 leaders this week and asking them to do just that. They should prepare and agree a global pandemic treaty that will better prepare and strengthen our health systems, and put the protection and safety of nurses and healthcare workers at its very heart.

‘We cannot change the past, but we do not have to repeat it. To honour those we have lost, now is the time for the world to unite, to take our future into our own hands, and write a history that generations to come will look back on proudly.’”

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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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