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International Council of Nurses calls for nurses to be at centre of new WHO global agreement on pandemic prevention and response

Geneva, Switzerland, 30 September 2022 – The International Council of Nurses (ICN) has presented its views at the second round of the World Health Organization’s (WHO) public hearings on the formulation of a new international agreement to prevent and manage further pandemics.

WHO set up the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body in December 2021 to draft an agreement or treaty following a report from the Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response on the outcomes of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The first round of public hearings was held 12-13 April 2022. Submissions to the second round of hearings were centred around the question: *“Based on your experience with the COVID-19 pandemic, what do you believe should be addressed at the international level to better protect against future pandemics?”*

In ICN’s submission, Chief Executive Officer Howard Catton [said](#):

“As a nurse and the Chief Executive Officer of the International Council of Nurses, I am honoured to speak on behalf of the world’s nurses.

‘The COVID-19 pandemic has taken a huge toll on the physical and mental health of health workers around the world, infecting millions and causing the deaths of more than 180,000 of them. As a result, we are now seeing alarmingly high levels of stress and burnout in nurses across the globe.

‘ICN’s own work on the impact of the pandemic and its effects on the global nursing workforce shows that we may need to replace up to 13 million nurses by 2030. We believe this workforce shortage is the greatest single threat to global health.

‘Our message to the United Nations is that nurses and healthcare workers must be at the centre of the new instrument or convention, and that resulting plans should specifically emphasise support, protection and safety of nurses and healthcare workers.

‘Spending on healthcare is not a cost, but a cast-iron investment that brings huge returns. Now is the time for the world to act in solidarity to support, protect and invest in health workers, recognising that good health is the bedrock of our global safety and security. Health and peace are inseparable, and neither are possible without healthcare workers. Thank you.”

The Negotiating Body is due to deliver a progress report to the 76th meeting of WHO’s governing body, the World Health Assembly (WHA), in May 2023, and submit its outcomes for consideration by the 77th WHA in May 2024.

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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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