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Hoarding and slow global roll-out of vaccines continue to put nurses at unacceptable risk, ICN calls for urgent action

Geneva, Switzerland; 06 September 2021 - The International Council of Nurses (ICN) says the slow roll-out of vaccines across Africa and other parts of the developing world is continuing to put exhausted nurses and other health workers at risk.

Responding to a [statement from former UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown](#) that Western countries are hoarding what could amount to one billion unused vaccines by the end of the year, ICN CEO Howard Catton called for urgent action:

“Nurses and other health workers are at the sharp end and are both directly and personally suffering the consequences of the unacceptably slow roll-out of vaccines in Africa where only 2% of the population are vaccinated. Gordon Brown is right to point out that Western nations are hoarding unused vaccines which is a major contributing factor to the snail’s pace of the roll out. Every day that nurses go to work unvaccinated, they are putting their lives on the line. We are talking about a predominantly female workforce who is also in fear of passing on the virus to their families. Worryingly, there are also increased reports of nurses suffering from abuse from anti-vaxxers.”

Mr Catton said it was a positive development that the G20 health ministers meeting in Rome has agreed to create a pact to ensure fairer vaccine distribution but added that words without action were not enough.

“Good intentions alone will not ensure that a vaccine is jabbed into the arm of a nurse in a developing country and - despite talk of sharing - the roll-out is not going fast enough or hard enough. It is uncertain whether we will meet the important WHO targets for global vaccinations and that is why ICN supports Gordon Brown’s call for an emergency G7 Vaccine Summit to address the issue of vaccine roll-out and instigate a plan of action.

‘We need to see a shift in the dial in vaccinations in Africa and elsewhere before the G20 Leaders’ Summit at the end of October, because if not, many more of our nurses, healthcare colleagues and their patients will die needlessly.

‘If anyone is under the illusion that this outrage affects only Africa and other developing regions, think again. We have seen how easily the COVID-19 virus mutates; we will only eliminate the virus if we do so on a global scale, otherwise we will all suffer the deadly consequences for years to come. Morally, it’s the right thing to do but it’s also in every country’s self-interest.’

ICN has been a vocal advocate for vaccine equity since the vaccines were first developed and notes that the roll-out is far behind the pace called for by the World Health Organization or goals set by the G7 in June 2021.

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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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