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ICN urges all governments to sign WHO's Health Worker Safety Charter and tackle the dangers faced by nurses

Geneva, Switzerland, 17 September 2020– International Council of Nurses (ICN) welcomes World Health Organization's Health Worker Safety [Charter](#) launched today on World Patient Safety Day, after ICN's own survey released earlier this week showed the extent of the dangers nurses face at work.

ICN's [report](#), Protecting Nurses from COVID-19 a Top Priority, has revealed how governments have failed to protect nurses and confirmed that more than 1,000 have died after contracting the virus.

The report contains the results of a world-wide survey which lays bare the severity and magnitude of the dangers nurses and other healthcare workers face in the line of duty.

ICN Chief Executive Office Howard Catton said:

“Our report confirmed the magnitude and the severity of the risks nurses and healthcare workers (HCWs) around the world are facing now. More than 1,000 nurses have died, millions are infected with the coronavirus, shortages of personal protective equipment (PPE) still exist, staff are not routinely being tested and they are still subject to violence and discrimination.

‘Governments around the world have been slow or failed to protect nurses and others from the effects of the pandemic, and that’s why we’re calling on all governments, right here, right now, to sign the WHO charter and act on it.’”

ICN has long argued that the safety of nurses and other healthcare workers should be a priority for governments so that patient safety can be guaranteed. It worked with WHO to develop the charter – Mr Catton is a member of WHO's Patient Safety Network - and made recommendations about what needs to be done.

The Charter contains many of ICN's recommendations, including on zero tolerance of violence and abuse, safe staffing levels, reducing work-related stress, improving work-life balance, having all the equipment needed to do the job safely, including PPE, and open communication in the workplace.

ICN is firmly backing the Charter and will work with its National Nursing Associations to encourage all governments to sign up and identify those that do not.

“The world already has a severe shortage of nurses: it cannot afford to lose any more, especially not now at the height of a global pandemic.

‘As our report shows, it is hugely important for healthcare worker safety to be centre stage in the design and delivery of healthcare services.

‘The pandemic is far from over and while the applause has stopped, nurses and the patients they care for are still in the eye of this deadly storm. Governments must commit to putting the safety of their healthcare workers at the centre of how their health systems are organised and managed. Doing so will improve health outcomes for their people and increase safety and security for their staff, and it will save nurses’ lives.’

The theme of today’s WHO Patient Safety Day is **Health Worker Safety: A Priority for Patient Safety**.

Mr Catton concluded, “Our report and the Charter recognise that health worker safety and patient safety are two sides of the same coin - you cannot have one without the other they are indivisible.”

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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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