

Nurse leaders in Asia identify key issues for *State of the World's Nursing* report

ICN Workforce Forum call for investment in nursing to achieve universal health coverage



Geneva, Switzerland & Seoul, Korea; 5 December 2019 – Participants of the 20th International Council of Nurses (ICN) Asia Workforce Forum (AWFF), held 21-22 November 2019 in Seoul, South Korea, have released a [communiqué](#) expressing the need for governments to invest in the education, remuneration and working conditions of nurse to support the achievement of universal health coverage (UHC).

Discussions between representatives from 11 National Nursing Associations (NNAs)¹ of the Asia region centred on the International Year of the Nurse and of the Midwife in 2020, the release of the first global report on *The State of the World's Nursing* in April 2020 and the challenges faced by the nursing workforce to support the achievement of universal health coverage (UHC). Dr Michelle Rumsey, Director of the WHO Collaborating Centre in Sydney Australia, Professor James Buchan, Adjunct Professor, University of Technology, Sydney, and Howard Catton, ICN Chief

¹ Chinese Nursing Association, College of Nursing Hong Kong, Indonesian National Nurses Association, Japanese Nursing Association, Nurses Association of Macau, Malaysian Nurses Association, Philippine Nurses Association, Singapore Nurses Association, Taiwan Nurses Association, Nurses Association of Thailand and Korean Nurses Association

Executive Officer, addressed the Forum which was hosted by the Korean Nurses Association (KNA).

KNA President Kyung Rim Shin welcomed participants to the AWFF saying, "We are gathered here today with a common goal to share our experiences and ideas of issues related to the nursing workforce of each country. Through this forum, we will set our priorities and make needed preparations for 2020 The Year of the Nurse and Midwife as well as seek ways to strengthen multilateral collaboration to overcome challenges faced by our profession."

WHO has estimated shortage of approximately nine million nurses worldwide, with some of the worst affected countries being in Asia. Participants at the Forum reported that all countries and regions still face difficulties due to the lack of nurses and stressed the importance not only to expand quantitatively, but also to equip registered nurses with the appropriate skills and qualifications that meet priority population health needs. The Communiqué highlighted that this is an investment not an expenditure which will have a multiple payback in terms of supporting the achievement of UHC, generating a return on investment through economic growth, and supporting social development through access to improved education and career opportunities¹.

The Forum agreed that all NNAs must work with other stakeholders to advance career development and professionalism of nurses by securing, recognising and rewarding excellence in nursing practice. Strategies for improving the retention for nurses, such as provision of safe and flexible working environment, elimination of workplace harassment, valuing recognition and respect for the nursing workforce, and securing fair wage and competitive employment conditions for nurses must be urgently developed and implemented.

They also agreed on the need to work with other stakeholders, including politicians, the media and civil society, to further develop the evidence, advocate and make the case for a positive, modern view of nurses, and for the central role they can and must play in delivering safe and effective care, including at an advanced practice level..

Increased representation of nurses in the policy-making process was considered critical as was the need for each country and government to establish the position of Chief Nursing Officer which can play a key role in reflecting the voice of nurses and in focusing on recognition and development of the nursing profession.

ICN Chief Executive Officer, Howard Catton, said

"We should not underestimate the importance of the issues that were highlighted at the AWFF, such as the need for investment in nursing, addressing staffing shortages, and a renewed focus on education and leadership roles in our profession. These are themes that will dominate the Year of the Nurse and the Midwife 2020 and no doubt be underlined by the first *State of World's Nursing* report. The Communiqué highlights the key issues identified by the NNAs for inclusion in the report, driving recommendations for investment and change in 2020 and beyond. It is important that *State of World's Nursing* report is not a 'one-off'. Only if it becomes a regular report can the full benefits

of the analysis be realised, through tracking progress, and evaluating the effect of policies, and the value and contribution of nurses to UHC be fully achieved. The AWFF has provided analysis and leadership not only for Asia, but across the world, because the challenges that nursing and our healthcare systems are facing are truly global.”

The ICN Workforce Forums (WFF) are held annually and hosted by volunteer member NNAs. In addition to the Asian WFF, ICN holds an annual International WFF.

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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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ⁱ UN High Level Commission on Health Employment and Economic Growth