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## **ICN calls on G20 leaders to prioritise and protect nurses for the benefit of all humanity**

**Geneva, Switzerland, 20 November 2020** – As G20 leaders meet this weekend in the shadow of the COVID-19 pandemic, the International Council of Nurses (ICN) is calling on them to unequivocally commit to investing in nurses, the health workforce and health systems for the good of humanity.

The pandemic has put unprecedented pressure and strain on our health systems as well as underscoring how vital nurses are to the health of every one of us and our ability to live our lives in freedom and prosperity.

ICN CEO Howard Catton said: “World leaders meeting this weekend should feel the hands of healthcare workers on their shoulders, thousands of whom have given their lives to care for others during the pandemic. The world is still in the grip of the virus and G20 leaders must come together in solidarity for the safety of humanity, all health and care workers and global security.

‘It is clear that the failure to invest in the nursing and healthcare workforce worldwide meant our health systems were unprepared for this pandemic and these are the people who have directly suffered the consequences - exhaustion, burnout, abuse, attacks, infections and tragically also deaths. Now is the time for our political leaders to act to show their support, not clap, and actions are what history will judge them by.

‘The success of a global vaccination programme is as dependent on the staff who will deliver it as the vaccine itself. Nurses are at the forefront of administering and delivering immunization programmes globally and know it is so much more than just a jab in the arm. People may be hesitant, have questions, reveal other concerns, and it is for all these reasons that Nursing leaders must be included in every part of the strategy to deliver the vaccines and themselves prioritized for the vaccine. We must care for the carers.’

‘There is no panacea but the exit door to the global pandemic will remain closed without investment in and support now for nurses and health and care workers everywhere.

‘As well as these vital immediate steps the G20 must show long term vision and seize the opportunity to rebuild our healthcare systems from the ashes of the pandemic, with nurses and nurse leaders at the heart. They should also demonstrate their commitment to nurse education and fair pay which will attract more people to the profession at a time when we have a shortage of six million nurses. We went into this pandemic with a depleted workforce, more than 20% short, one in five down, even before the greatest health emergency the world has ever faced and that must never be allowed to happen again.’

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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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