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## **2020 International Year of the Nurse and Midwife: a catalyst for a brighter future for health around the globe**

**Geneva, Switzerland, 30<sup>th</sup> December 2019** – The International Council of Nurses (ICN) and Nursing Now call on governments to make 2020 a landmark year in health on the way to fulfilling the promise of Universal Health Coverage.

As the International Year of the Nurse and Midwife begins, ICN and Nursing Now are urging world leaders to make massive investments in nursing and midwifery to pave the way for a brighter future for health around the world.

2020 was designated as the Year of the Nurse and the Midwife by the World Health Organization in recognition of the contributions they make, and the risks associated with nursing shortages.

The world's National Nursing Associations and Nursing Now groups are planning hundreds of events to mark 2020, which will also see celebrations of the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Florence Nightingale, and the publication of the first WHO State of the World's Nursing Report.

Nurses and midwives are key to the achievement of WHO's goal of Universal Health Coverage because they play a critical role in health promotion, disease prevention and the delivery of care in all settings.

But WHO estimates there will be a worldwide **shortfall of nine million nurses and midwives by 2030** unless radical action is taken now.

ICN President Annette Kennedy said:

“Whenever I talk to nurses, I realise that each of them has a story to tell. They are with patients from birth to death, they share in their saddest and most joyful times, they help them to get through the most traumatic of situations and they help them to recover their lives. And sometimes, they sit with patients while they are dying, providing comfort and solace in the last moments of life.

In 2020 we need nurses to share their stories, to tell their families, their friends and the communities that they live in what it is like to be a nurse, the pressures they are under, the challenges face and the triumphs they witness.

Increasing the public's understanding of who nurses are, what they do and the amazing contribution they make to the societies they live in, will help us to ensure that the legacy of 2020 will go on for years in the shape of more and better supported nurses providing essential care in the communities they serve.”

ICN Chief Executive Officer Howard Catton said:

“WHO’s vision of improved global health will only become a reality if there is a massive investment in nursing. The research evidence is clear: having more nurses leads to better health outcomes.

The potentially catastrophic shortage of nurses we face over the next decade can be avoided, but only if governments act swiftly and decisively to turn this situation around. ICN and Nursing Now will be working with nurses around the world during 2020 to raise the profile of the profession to help to retain our current staff and recruit a new generation into what is the most rewarding job on earth.

But we also want to use 2020 to bust myths and traditional stereotypes about nursing, show the public the reality of 21st century nursing and the amazing difference nurses can make when they are enabled to perform at the top of their game. Nurses are not the only solution to healthcare problems, but when they properly supported and well educated, their contribution can be extraordinary.

Let’s make 2020 a catalyst for a brighter future for healthcare around the globe, so that we will be able to look back and say ‘we turned this situation around’ and nobody will have to live their life without the healthcare that they need.”

Nursing Now Co-chair Lord Nigel Crisp said:

“The evidence is clear - invest in nursing and midwifery and you will improve health care for all. 2020 provides an unprecedented opportunity to show what more nurses and midwives can achieve if given the support and opportunity to do so.

Investing in nursing in midwifery will make an enormous contribution to the rapid, cost-effective and high quality scaling up of universal health care.

It is time for governments to step up and take decisive action to invest in their nursing and midwifery workforce. This requires countries to increase their allocation to health budgets, not only increasing numbers but ensuring that nurses and midwives are resourced and supported to meet the world's health care needs.”

Nursing Now Executive Director Dr Barbara Stilwell said:

“Nurses are ready for this moment - 2020 is the chance to show what nurses can do to improve health for everybody, everywhere.

Nursing Now has offered a chance for nurses to tell us what they need to be even more effective leaders and expert practitioners. They need to have equipment, drugs and an environment where they can practice effectively. They need better skills in making a case to politicians and policymakers for essential investments in nursing. And we and they want to have the nursing workforce represent demographic realities - which means more men and more people from ethnic minorities.

In 2020, nurses will make a compelling case for these investments in nurses and nursing. This is an opportunity that comes around rarely but nurses are ready. Watch out for the nurses in 2020!”

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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.

**Nursing Now** is a global campaign with the goal of improving health globally by raising the status and profile of nursing. With a growing network of over 470 groups active in 110 countries, Nursing Now is working to influence global and national health policies. Nursing Now is a project of the Burdett Trust for Nursing run in collaboration with the WHO and ICN.

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