

ICN President Annette Kennedy receives prestigious award from WHO Director General Dr Tedros in recognition of her service to nursing



Geneva, Switzerland, 4 November 2021– International Council of Nurses (ICN) President, Annette Kennedy, has received a special award from World Health Organization (WHO) Director General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, in recognition of her life-long contribution to the nursing profession.

The Director General's Health Leaders Award for Outstanding Leadership in Global Health was awarded on the last day of Ms Kennedy's four-year term as President of ICN. During the pandemic, Ms Kennedy provided leadership for the organisation and the world's 27 million nurses as they were confronted by a deadly global pandemic and mounting staff shortages.

Presenting Ms Kennedy with the award on the last day of ICN's virtual Congress, Dr Tedros said: "I would now like to personally thank you, President Kennedy - Annette - for your outstanding and passionate leadership of the global nursing community. We began our respective roles around the same time. And we have worked closely our entire tenure. Your leadership, values, and clear voice have played a crucial role in strengthening nursing these past four years.

'You have inspired and will continue to inspire generations of nurses and women globally. You will be greatly missed. I wish you every success in your next adventure. For your leadership, partnership, and dedication, it is therefore my great honour to present you with the Director-General's Leadership Award, on behalf of WHO.'

On receiving the award, Ms Kennedy said:

“Thank you, Dr Tedros, for this award, which I accept, not for me, but on behalf of all the world’s nurses. It has been an incredible journey and thank you for your kind words.”

Ms Kennedy took the opportunity to impress on Dr Tedros and his colleagues the pressing issues that are facing nursing over the next decade, including the pandemic and its dire consequences for nurses, the lack of monitoring healthcare worker illness and deaths from COVID-19, the global nursing shortage and the effects of unethical international recruitment.

Ms Kennedy is a registered nurse and midwife, with a degree in nursing studies and an MSc in public sector analysis. She was the Director of Professional Development at the Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation for 19 years, and established its Education, Research and Resource Centre.

She was elected 28th President of ICN in June 2017 after serving four years as its Vice President, choosing TOGETHER as her presidential watchword. Previously, she was President of the European Federation of Nurses, where she was active in lobbying the European Parliament, Commission and Council.

In her tenure as ICN President, Ms Kennedy oversaw the transformation of ICN, and steered it through the extremely challenging events of the past 18 months, as nurses took control to help the world in its struggle against the COVID-19 pandemic.

ICN has grown in its significance, influence and stature under Ms Kennedy’s presidency, and it is now a leading voice in the world of healthcare policymaking, making nurses a force to be reckoned with wherever decisions about healthcare policies, strategies and systems are being made.

Speaking after Dr Tedros presented the award, ICN Chief Executive Officer Howard Catton said:

“The bestowing of this uniquely prestigious award by Dr Tedros reflects the incredible impact Annette has had on ICN and on the world of nursing, and it is thoroughly well deserved. She has been the right leader at the right time, taking ICN from being the leading organisation for nurses to being a global force in healthcare, moving us to the centre of the stage, not just during the pandemic, but also in her work as an influencer wherever the voice of nursing needed to be heard. Working with her has been a delight. I am sure she will continue to be a significant figure in the nursing world for years to come. Bravo Annette.”

WHO Chief Nursing Officer Elizabeth Iro congratulated Ms Kennedy for her inspirational and influential leadership, and thanked her for her part in mobilising the global community of nurses.

Addressing Ms Kennedy, Ms Iro said:

“Under your leadership at ICN you have built a stronger relationship with WHO and with global partners. You have never hesitated to bring the challenging issues affecting nurses today to the top tables of governments, policy makers and, of course, to WHO and our Director General. The immediate issue for ICN and WHO now is to address the global shortage of nurses: the long-term agenda is our continued support in countries in the implementation of the Global Strategic Direction for Nursing and Midwifery policy priorities. I look forward to continued working with ICN on these items. I wish you all the very best for your next part of your life journey. You have truly lived up to your chosen watchword for your term – TOGETHER!”

Dr Jim Campbell, Director of the WHO's Health Workforce Department, also thanked Ms Kennedy for her service, saying:

"You represent a phenomenal organisation of National Nursing Associations around the world. That togetherness with your board and your members, the work that you have been doing with other health professional associations brought all professional occupations together. We have seen your ability to bring people together, to understand the stories that are important and get people to act on those stories.

'It is with great pleasure, on behalf of WHO, to thank you for your leadership. It is a real privilege to see you today awarded the Director General's Award: it is a very small club that you are welcomed into, and I wish you every success in the future.'

The other recipients of the WHO Director General's Award are Her Royal Highness Princess Muna Al-Hussein of Jordan, for her dedication and service to health and humanity, German Chancellor Angela Merkel for her outstanding contribution to the health of the world's people, and Henrietta Lacks, who received her award 70 years after her death in recognition of her posthumous contribution to scientific research.

Note for 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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