



Date: 22 August 2019

To: Mr Howard Catton, Chief Executive Officer ICN;
Mrs Valentina Sarkisova, Chair Steering committee EFNNMA

Dear Mr Catton *Howard*,
Dear Mrs Sarkisova *Valentina*,

Thank you very much for your letter of 24th July 2019. Your strong commitment to the nursing and midwifery movement is inspirational and a source of much encouragement for me.

Nurses and midwives constitute the majority of healthcare professionals in Europe and thus make significant contributions to improving health and saving lives. I fully agree with you: nurses and midwives are fundamental to the efforts to achieve Universal Health Coverage and the Sustainable Development Goals.

As both of you are aware, strengthening nursing and midwifery in our Region has been a key priority for me and my team in the Division of Health Systems and Public Health at WHO/Europe. We have been bringing together and working closely with various stakeholders and partners, including ICN and EFNNMA, to strengthen nursing and midwifery for better health for all.

I am proud of what we have so far accomplished together, particularly in enabling policies that maximize nursing and midwifery potential and their engagement at all levels of health systems including policy- and decision making. Allow me to mention a few successful initiatives that have been undertaken in recent years:

- We renewed the pan-European network of Government Chief Nursing and Midwifery Officers (CNMOs). Regular WHO regional meetings of CNMOs, WHO Collaborating Centers for Nursing and Midwifery and the European Forum of National Nursing and Midwifery Associations (EFNNMA) have been organized since 2011. It's been always my priority to be part of these meetings, whether in Copenhagen or elsewhere. I vividly recall the first CNMOs meeting, which took place in Warsaw, Poland, in October 2011 in the presence of the then-First lady of Georgia, a nurse herself.

- We strengthened collaboration and partnership with EFNNMA including through the Memorandum of Understanding and consecutive Action Plans 2014-2016 and 2016-2020, which recognize EFNNMA as a valued WHO European strategic partner.
- Under my mandate of Director, Division of Health Systems and Public Health at WHO/Europe, I contributed to the expansion of the WHO network of European WHO Collaborating Centers for nursing and midwifery from three in 2010 to nine in 2018.
- I am particularly proud of the joint work of all partners and Member States in the development of the *European strategic Directions for Strengthening Nursing and Midwifery towards Health 2020 Goals*, and the *European Compendium of Good Practices in Nursing and Midwifery towards Health 2020 Goals* adopted at the WHO Regional Committee for Europe in 2015. These strategic documents aim to strengthen nurses' and midwives' potential, develop leadership and ensure their equitable access within strengthened health systems.
- Through much valued collaboration with our colleagues from Nursing and Midwifery Collaborating Centers, we developed a number of important WHO publications¹.
- I would also like to mention the ongoing work, including in collaboration with EFNNMA, in collecting examples of good practices and innovations in nursing and midwifery and disseminating them through social-media channels and campaigns.
- This year, we have been working, in collaboration with EFNNMA, on a year-long strategic communications focus in social and other media on the richness and diversity of nursing and midwifery leadership across our Region. This work leads the way towards the 2020 Year of the Nurse and Midwife, the culmination of the Nursing Now! Campaign, and the publication of the first State of the World's Nursing report on World Health Day next year. In this context, it is important to show the real dimension of the work of nurses and midwives, like we have recently done by publishing a top story on a young nurse and her mentor on International Youth Day².

Please rest assured that, if elected, I will intensify WHO/Europe's efforts to raise the profile and status of nursing and midwifery across the Region and continue to emphasize the importance of the nurses' and midwives' voice at all levels of health systems. To do this, I commit to establishing

¹ Examples include:

- Simulation in nursing and midwifery education: <http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/Health-systems/nursing-and-midwifery/publications/2018/simulation-in-nursing-and-midwifery-education-2018>;

- Facilitating evidence-based practice in nursing and midwifery in the WHO European Region: <http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/Health-systems/nursing-and-midwifery/publications/2017/facilitating-evidence-based-practice-in-nursing-and-midwifery-in-the-who-european-region-2017>

² <http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/Health-systems/nursing-and-midwifery/news/news/2019/8/international-youth-day-2019-role-of-mentors-in-nursing-and-midwifery-education>

a programme on nursing and midwifery and a post of Chief Nursing and Midwifery Officer at WHO/Europe.

I warmly welcomed the decision of the World Health Assembly to designate 2020 as the "Year of the Nurse and Midwife" and I am much looking forward to discussing with both of you on how to extend this key year of celebration of nursing and midwifery to the WHO European Region at the ministerial level.

Finally, let me end by sharing a quote from Mr Paul De Raeve of the European Federation of Nurses Associations who said: "The greatest leaders on Nursing and Midwifery are those whose beloved Mother is a nurse". Dear Howard, Dear Valentina, I am one of them.

Respectfully Yours,

Hans

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Hans', with a stylized flourish extending from the end.

PS: Attached is the picture taken at the ICN's WalkTheTalk stand before this year's World Health Assembly. I am always on the look for nurses and midwifery inspiration, friendship and great joint work!