

Reference: Your letter of 24 July 2019

Dear Howard Catton and Valentina Sarkisova,

15 August 2019

It is such a privilege receiving your letter. I would like to extend my gratitude for giving me this unique opportunity to express my highest acknowledgement of the nurses' and midwives' vital role in health systems, the lifeblood of the health workforce. This is my passion that I have been emphasizing throughout my career and I am committed to bringing it to the very core of WHO Regional Office for Europe's agenda and work.

In doing this, I am fully aligned with the International Council of Nurses (ICN) and the European Forum of National Nurses and Midwives Associations (EFNNMA) in recognizing nurses' and midwives' critical contribution to universal health coverage and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) towards a healthier Europe, promoting gender equity and economic development.

Nurses and midwives are among the critical professions that represent a true mission. As a patient enters and moves across the health system, nurses and midwives accompany their steps caring like a family member and with the expertise of a true professional. Their dedication, their knowledge, their skills make a difference to the physical, mental health and wellbeing of the populations. This is why I believe that the European Region needs to invest heavily on their central role within health systems in achieving Universal Health Coverage and people-centered primary health care and beyond.

My vision for the next decade - Health 2030 –puts people at the center for a healthier Europe: with all and for all. Shaping this vision, I evoked the very important role of nurses and midwives as translating the concept of people-centered, accessible and integrated quality health services for all into reality. With their very function, nurses and midwives fulfill all strategic priorities on which Health 2030 is built. Please find details of my vision in the following website; <https://www.nedretemiroglu.com/>.

Nurses and midwives provide essential health services, addressing health determinants with focus on prevention and health promotion which are central to public health addressing today's major health challenges such as NCDs or the ageing populations. As the most respected and trusted influencers by the individuals and the community, they promote health literacy and healthy behaviors working with communities and families; they provide and manage personal care and treatment; they assist in clinical decision-making and encourage people to prevent diseases and keep themselves healthy.

Nurses and midwives play the invaluable role of providing first aid in emergencies, exposing their lives in outbreaks or humanitarian crisis to take care of the sick or protect those at risk. They engage vulnerable and marginalized populations and address inequalities in health. They find innovative solutions to health prevention and care and navigate people throughout their life-course. Nurses and midwives use their expertise while holding people's hands, providing a shoulder to rely on and conveying their excellence with compassion.

Nurses and midwives constitute for nearly 50% of health workforce and unfortunately 50% of the health workforce shortage is among nurses and midwives. I will work with countries, partners and all key stakeholders addressing this challenge and embedding the role of nurses' and midwives' into Health 2030's objectives. To this end, I am committed to establish the position of Chief Nursing and Midwifery in WHO Regional Office for Europe who will be an integral part of my senior leadership team. Through this function, I aim at ensuring that skilled, multidisciplinary, motivated nurses and midwives are in the right place and in the right number.

This will entail enhancing their educational and professional pathways with opportunities, incentives and strong advocacy for their essential role within the health systems. It will mean acknowledging and rewarding their work and raising their profile to participate in leadership and decision-making.

It will leverage on policy options, regulatory frameworks and collaboration between countries to address shortages of health workforce. It will create platforms for networking and for their voices to be heard. Eventually it will result in strengthening nurses' and midwives' positioning within the health systems, which in turn will strengthen the health system itself. This makes the essence of Health 2030.

I also very warmly welcome the initiative of Dr Tedros announcing 2020 as the Year of the Nurse and Midwife and I am looking forward to working closely with you in advocating for strengthening the nursing and midwifery throughout the European Region of WHO. I am also committed to take an active role in the Global Health Workforce Network engaging in intersectoral and multi stakeholder mechanisms to implement the Global Strategy on Human Resources for Health and European framework towards a sustainable health workforce. I am ready to work with you and the Member States of WHO European Region, the partners and the civil society to initiate a session at a future session of WHO European Regional Committee.

Thank you for listening and for caring. And thank you for giving the opportunity to share my position with your respected member associations. Please rest assured that I am committed to working hand in hand with you and that you can rely on me, because I care.

Sincerely yours,

Dr Nedret Emiroglu

Candidate for the WHO Regional Director for Europe