



## **WHO EXECUTIVE BOARD**

### **Special session on the COVID-19 response**

Provisional agenda item 3.

#### **Update on implementation of resolution WHA73.1 (2020) on the COVID-19 response**

October 2020

This International Year of the Nurse and the Midwife, nurses around the world have worked tirelessly to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, risking, and sometimes losing, their lives. Increased support for the nursing workforce is essential - The State of the World's Nursing report has provided the evidence for investment in nursing education, jobs and leadership and ICN calls on governments to implement its recommendations.

ICN's report of its world-wide survey has revealed how governments have failed to protect nurses and healthcare workers (HCWs). Shortages of personal protective equipment still exist and HCWs are experiencing discrimination, violence and intense psychological distress. The report shows that HCW safety must be central to the design and delivery of healthcare services. We urge countries to formally recognise COVID-19 as an occupational disease.

The number of COVID-19 infections and deaths in HCWs is a global emergency. ICN estimates that at least 10% of infections are among HCWs, which is over three million cases and rising. Unfortunately, many countries are not collecting this data. At least 1000 nurses have died in 44 countries, but with a lack of data, the true figure is much higher. Data is crucial to improving infection control measures and saving the lives of nurses and patients. ICN repeats the urgent call to collect systematic and standardised data, supported by clear reporting and monitoring mechanisms.

The pandemic has underscored that nurses are the backbone of health systems and are critical to providing essential services for this pandemic and beyond. However, to fully leverage this requires nursing leadership in policy making at all levels. ICN calls on all countries to establish a GCNO position within Ministries of Health, with sufficient resourcing and senior level decision-making responsibilities and authority. ICN also calls on the WHO to establish a GCNO position in each WHO Region.