



71st WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY

Provisional agenda item:

11.2 Public health preparedness and response

May 2018

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of the International Council of Nurses (ICN) and the over 20 million nurses worldwide.

We thank WHO for the draft global strategic plan - improving public health preparedness and response is of utmost importance considering the ongoing risk of public health events occurring secondary to natural and human-induced hazards such as climate change and conflict.

Nurses are critical to preventing, detecting, assessing, and responding to these events and are at the frontline of care during and after, providing acute care, response coordination, information management and mental health support. Our technical skills and knowledge of epidemiology, pharmacology, cultural-familial structures and psychosocial issues, coupled with our experience in health systems strengthening makes nursing of particular value to the development of national plans and policies for public health preparedness and response.

Nurses participate in one of the most extended and important phases – recovery. ICN believes that a significantly greater focus must be placed on recovery. As was seen with the Ebola outbreak, these events can destroy a country's health and social systems and reverse any efforts to achieving the SDG targets.

The Ebola outbreak has been a prime example of how health emergencies have long lasting and tragic effects on communities and their health systems. They create conditions such as lack of security and safety, lack of access to healthcare services, family separation, abuse, neglect and exploitation with long-term negative social impacts. ICN calls on countries to keep this top of mind when developing the recovery phase of national plans.

Management of public health events without disruption in healthcare service delivery cannot be achieved without a sufficient number of well-educated healthcare professionals. ICN urges WHO and governments to focus on longer-term health workforce planning and continuing education of health professionals as an initial step forward towards building resilient health systems.

Thank you.