



## **SEVENTY-THIRD WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY**

Provisional agenda item 13.2

### **WHO's work in health emergencies**

November 2020

ICN believes that the involvement of nurses is essential to prevent epidemics and pandemics and reduce existing health emergency risk.

There is an urgent need to accelerate efforts to build capacities of nurses at all levels to limit morbidity and mortality and maintain health system functioning and community wellbeing in the midst of continued health threats and disasters. ICN recently issued updated Core Competencies in Disaster Nursing with the aim of improving disaster prevention, preparedness, response and recovery. These are available to Member States to support workforce development and ICN encourages nursing educational programmes, institutions employing nurses and organisations participating in disaster and emergency response to adopt these competencies.

Considering the vital contribution that nurses make to preventing and responding to health emergencies, it is crucial to include the health and safety of the healthcare workforce in all health emergency preparedness and response plans at every level.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, ICN has consistently raised concerns about the impacts on the healthcare workforce and how this is affecting the world's ability to respond to this health emergency. ICN estimates that, on average, 10% of infections are among healthcare workers, which is almost five million cases and rising. Unfortunately, many countries are not collecting this data. At least 1500 nurses have died in 44 countries, but with a lack of data, the true figure could be at least 20,000. Data is crucial to improving infection control measures and saving the lives of nurses and patients. To put it into perspective - as many nurses have died during this pandemic as died during World War I. ICN repeats the urgent call to collect systematic and standardised data, supported by clear reporting and monitoring mechanisms. ICN also calls on governments to take urgent action required to protect their healthcare workforce.