



## **ICN luncheon webinar for nursing delegates at the 75<sup>th</sup> World Health Assembly meeting**

**Geneva, Switzerland; 25 May 2022** - The International Council of Nurses (ICN) has held a luncheon webinar for nurse delegates at this year's 75<sup>th</sup> World Health Assembly (WHA) meeting in Geneva.

The WHA is the governing body of the World Health Organization (WHO), which decides WHO's policies for the coming year. ICN was one of the first organisations to be in 'special relations' with the WHA, which means it can deliver official interventions on topics that concern the profession and ensure that nurses' voices are heard at the very highest level of global health policy making.

ICN President Dr Pamela Cipriano welcomed the ICN delegates from more than 40 countries who are attending this year's WHA either in person or virtually. Dr Cipriano thanked WHO Chief Nurse Elizabeth Iro, presidents of ICN's member National Nursing Associations, and other distinguished guests and delegates for contributing to the nursing presence at WHA.

"This year, the World Health Assembly will be addressing several topics which are of really serious interest and concern for us because of the threats to global health security, which is a primary aspect of our agenda. ICN has been representing nursing at the World Health Assembly since the second assembly in 1949. The WHA is a really important platform for us to be able to raise our voice and concerns at the highest level of policy making."

Dr Cipriano spoke about the recent ICN/WHO/International Confederation of Midwives TRIAD meetings, which brought together more than 650 nursing and midwifery leaders from ministries of health, national nursing and midwifery associations, regulators and educators from more than 165 countries.

Dr Cipriano said the Triad report renewed the three organisation's commitment to working together on accelerating the implementation of the Global Strategic Directions for Nursing and Midwifery, which focuses on jobs, education, leadership and service delivery.

"We talked about adopting innovative strategies to strengthen the capacity and optimal management of health workforce teams, particularly through the acceleration of telehealth, digital education and learning. We also know it's going to be important to increase interprofessional collaboration, optimise scopes of practice and upgrade the competencies of all health workers. We welcome WHO's Global Health and Care Worker Compact to protect health and care workers and safeguard their rights. We want to advance support and safeguards in national health systems, aligned with the WHO Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel. In conversation with the [WHO] Director General, we know this is a key concern for WHO and member states. We also want to support and reinforce the implementation of the International Labour Organisation Nursing Personnel Convention."

ICN CEO Howard Catton said the WHA nursing delegation, which is made up of representatives from National Nursing Associations, ICN affiliate organisations, ICN Board members, ICN Global Nursing Leadership Institute scholars and students, and a strong nursing student group, had made their voices heard, and that their messages would have an impact on national government departments of health, and influence healthcare policies in those countries.

Mr Catton said the TRIAD meeting communique also sent out an important message: “The TRIAD statement is a clear call to action that addresses the most fundamental and pressing issues facing nurses over the next two years, including the effects and after-effects of the pandemic, workforce shortages, nurses’ health and wellbeing, and the latest trends in international nurse migration. ICN, through its delegation, will be working with its Nursing Associations to monitor what is said at WHA, but more importantly what actions governments and other leadership organisations commit to. We will hold them to account.”

WHO Chief Nurse Elizabeth Iro praised ICN for putting on the webinar and sent a message of thanks to all nurses for all they do in caring for patients, families and communities. She said one of the key messages from the WHA was that there is no health without peace, and no peace without health.

Dr Iro said: “More people die of disease than die in battles. Peace is a prerequisite for health. Courage is not a value that is lacking in nurses – we have proven and shown that courage and resilience through the pandemic and in conflict situations, and I really have to commend you all for this. Our strength comes from communication and collaboration as a united global nursing community. In his opening address, Dr Tedros said ‘If we don’t dream of a better world, we will keep waking up in this one.’ We have much still to overcome, but we must remain consistent and united in our efforts to ensure that, as a critical element of our health systems, we remain focused on better health outcomes for our people.”

ICN Nursing and Health Senior Policy Adviser Erica Burton praised the 70-strong delegation and their work at the WHA. “As the largest healthcare group, we need the profession there with a loud voice. WHA is a significant platform for our advocacy work and for global health.” Ms Burton said the delegates’ contributions were making the nursing voice heard and ensuring that nurses’ views are fed back into nursing policy through individual National Nursing Associations. She said a report on ICN’s activities at WHA would be published in early July.

ICN Nursing and Health Policy Adviser Hoi Shan Fokeladeh presented the six interventions ICN is making at WHA, on Human Resources for Health, WHO’s preparedness for emergencies, infection prevention and control, public health and drug problems, the global health for peace initiative and a joint statement with the World Health Professions Alliance on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases.

ICN Associate Director for Nursing and Health Policy David Stewart spoke about this year’s International Nursing Day resources, which has practical case studies and policy recommendations that reflect and address many of the challenges nursing has faced since the start of the pandemic. Mr Stewart also paid a moving tribute to the renowned nurse Professor Kristine Gebbie who has recently died. He said she had made a real difference to countless nurses and patients throughout her career, including revolutionising AIDS care, and, having led the response to the attacks on the Twin Towers in 2001, she changed how health services respond to disasters globally.

Mr Stewart said that despite massive shortages, many gaps in healthcare services had been filled by nurses, who were adapting and acting flexibly to ensure that patients still get the care they need.

“Nurses are exposed more than any other profession to potentially psychologically traumatic events. It is something nurses are bearing for a long period of time. Nurses are not weak - they are incredibly strong - but under such burdens over long periods they are bound to have particular stresses and strains. In this IND report, we have called for a multi-sector approach. We do not believe that there is one magic bullet. There need to be actions that involve the public, the professions, governments and other agencies. Everyone has a part to play to enable, empower and support this amazing workforce to deliver on its mandate to the public in providing better health outcomes.”

Chair of ICN’s Nursing Student Steering Group Avani Jain spoke of her experience at WHA with 13 other nursing students from around the world. She said they were able to provide a unique perspective and would be producing a report later in the year.

Closing the event, Dr Cipriano said: “We can feel the enthusiasm, but we know how important it is for us to be participating in these discussions, and so we are grateful for those who are in the delegations. We have some amazing leaders who are working to move forward the issues that are important to us. And thank you to everyone for the work that you do. We have all of these critical issues, not only the pressing issues for global health security and health equity, but protection of our workforce and advancing the goals that we have in order to strengthen nursing and midwifery around the world. This is a really important time for us to look forward to more days of great accomplishments to take forward across the year. We have incredible solidarity around these issues.”

\* \* \*