

**International Council of Nurses
The 19th Asia Workforce Forum,
November 15-16, 2018**

ICN AWFF Communiqué

1. Asian nurse leaders representing approximately 6 million nurses from ten Nurses Associations from across Asia participated in the 19th Asia Workforce Forum (AWFF) of the International Council of Nurses (ICN), cohosted by the College of Nursing Hong Kong and held in Hong Kong, November 15-16, 2018.
2. Participants reported that whilst there had been some slight overall increase in nurse staffing levels in some, but not all countries or regions since last year, that this did not meet demand for health care, and that all countries and regions were still facing the challenge of nurse shortages caused by increasing demand, driven by population growth and ageing. Nurse leaders from the 10 countries and regions are in strong agreement that there is an urgent need to increase nurse staffing in order to achieve safe levels for patients and the population, and that nurse retention must also be improved.
3. Participants support the recent Astana Declaration¹ which was agreed by all W.H.O member states, on the need to sustain primary health care as the priority for efficient and effective health care services and population health. Political will and sustainable financial resources will be vital underpinnings to delivering on these necessary improvements. It is also the case that effective health services cannot function without sufficient well motivated and skilled nurses. Nurses pay and conditions of employment must be both fair and competitive, in comparison to other career options if optimal staffing levels are to be achieved and sustained in the countries and regions of Asia. Positive and supportive working environments, manageable workloads, and safe staffing levels will also enhance nurse retention and facilitate the delivery of high quality patient care.
4. Nurse leaders also agreed that nursing education and clinical practice must be fully aligned so that nurses are prepared for delivery of safe and quality nursing practice

and the realities of fast paced, and often stressful and demanding roles. Governments and employers in Asia must also invest in continuous professional development of nurses, to keep their skills up to date, and to maintain their motivations at a high level; this will support change and innovation in health care delivery, and demonstrated the value placed in the nursing workforce.

5. Accurate, complete and up-to- date workforce staffing, costs and outcomes data must be made available to nursing leaders and other policy makers who are focused on sustaining an effective nursing workforce and addressing the critical issue of nurse shortages and safe working environment. Strong evidence, including economic analysis and key measures of nurse impact and care outcome. are required to support rational policy decision.
6. Nurse leaders fully endorsed the global Nursing Now campaign² which is advocating and providing the evidence for nurse to be fully involved in policy making on nursing and care issues. Nurses have a central and critical role in delivering Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and in driving the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The evidence of their contribution must be more completely recorded and made accessible, so as to inform effective policy decisions. This will require collaborative efforts of stakeholders including governments [notably ministries of health, education and finance] and other stakeholders such as ICN, WHO and NNAs. Each country/region must ensure the availability, adequacy, and accuracy of the data for policy development. This standardized information will be crucial to the full development of the global report of the State of the Worlds Nursing which is scheduled for completion in 2020, with the full engagement of WHO, ICN and Nursing Now. We call on all NNAs to be fully engaged and support the development of this critical report.
7. We call on all nations and National Nurses Associations to firmly support, and require their governments to implement, the key recommendations of the UN Commission on Health Employment and Economic Growth³, which highlighted that investment in nursing and other health sector employment is an economic driver, can improve social inclusion, and can provide “decent work” and career opportunities to many more women.
8. Nurses are the principal group of health personnel providing health care at all levels, and sustaining effective links between individuals, families, communities and the rest of the health care system. Nurses should be empowered and supported to take on

collaborative leadership roles in interprofessional health care teams. All countries/regions should have a Chief Nursing Officer role at the executive level which provides expert input on nursing to government, advice and direction on health policy, and works with other nurse leaders to develop the nursing profession.

9. The nurse leaders at the Forum strongly supported the need for all countries to give full consideration to the growing evidence base on the cost effectiveness of nurses working in advanced roles, and work to ensure that there are no barriers to nurses working at the full extent of the scope of their practice. This is notably the case in primary health care (PHC) where evidence highlights that nurses in advanced roles, and nurse led services, can provide effective care, achieve positive health outcomes for patients and improve self-management. The participants also strongly endorsed that a collaborative multidisciplinary care team is essential for effective PHC and agreed that they will advocate for governance and funding models that support nurse-led and team-based care.
10. Nurses work in all care environments and are central to ensure patient safety. Nurses are positioned to the advance the level of healthcare quality and safety. We draw attention on all nations and NNAs to implement the WHO Third Global Patient Safety Challenge: Medication Without Harm⁴. Other safety issues including reducing healthcare acquired infection, patient's falls, and surgical safety are also crucial. We advocate that there must be a "no blame" culture when examining patient safety and risk issues- evidence supports this approach as the best way to achieve long term improvements in patient safety continuous quality care improvement.

References:

1. <https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/primary-health/declaration/gcphc-declaration.pdf>
2. <https://www.nursingnow.org/vision/>
3. <https://www.who.int/hrh/com-heeg/en/>
4. <https://www.who.int/patientsafety/medication-safety/medication-without-harm-brochure/en/>