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International Council of Nurses calls for ethical recruitment process to address critical shortage of nurses

Geneva, Switzerland, 21 November 2019 – The International Council of Nurses (ICN) calls on governments to monitor and publish data on nurse migration and adhere to World Health Organization (WHO) standards for ethical international recruitment.

As the world faces a potentially catastrophic shortage of nurses over the next decade, ICN has published a [position statement](#) on international career mobility and ethical nurse recruitment.

ICN Chief Executive Officer Howard Catton said: “The World Health Organization is predicting a global shortage of nine million nurses and midwives by 2030 and we can already see the terrible effects of a lack of nurses in many countries around the world.

Imbalances in funding between rich and poor countries means there is an increased risk of unscrupulous international recruitment that fails to adhere to ethical principles and leaves vulnerable health systems stripped of their most valuable asset, qualified nurses.

It is crucial that all countries train and retain more of their own nurses and implement ethical recruitment practices when they employ nurses from overseas.

Career mobility is important for many nurses: it enables them to further their professional development, maximise their skills and qualifications, and fulfil their personal career goals. And the *quid pro quo* of this is that they provide nursing care in countries where there are shortages of appropriately skilled nursing personnel.

But there have been many cases of internationally educated nurses being poorly treated by their employers, and some countries that can ill-afford to lose their nurses have been left with insufficient numbers because of aggressive recruitment from overseas.”

In 2006, ICN and CGFNS International Inc established the [International Centre on Nurse Migration](#) (ICNM) to develop, promote and disseminate research, policy and information on global nurse migration and human resources in nursing. This resource centre features news, resources and publications aimed at policy makers, planners and practitioners.

The ICN position statement calls on governments and employers to address their workforce shortages by training and educating enough nurses to meet their own country’s health needs, and to adopt appropriate policies when taking nurses from other countries.

Mr Catton said the WHO’s goal of Universal Health Coverage will only be achieved if governments provide a sustainable nursing workforce that is properly educated and remunerated for the work that nurses do, adding: “Any international recruitment should adhere to WHO’s global code of practice on international recruitment and follow ICN’s guidance concerning nurses’ welfare and

employment rights, and the requirements of the countries that are supplying nurses to the rest of the world.”

Mr Catton spoke about the issue at ICN’s 20th Asia Workforce Forum, hosted by the Korean Nurses Association in Seoul on 21 November. The event was attended by nurses from 12 National Nursing Associations, representing the eight million nurses who live in the region.

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Note to Editors

The **International Council of Nurses** (ICN) is a federation of more than 130 national nurses’ associations representing the millions of nurses worldwide. Operated by nurses and leading nursing internationally, ICN works to ensure quality care for all and sound health policies globally.

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