

ICN Workforce Forum Communiqué

Safe Nurse Staffing Levels are Vital to Deliver Quality Patient Care

1. Nurse leaders from nine countries¹ attended the 22nd International Workforce Forum of the International Council of Nurses (ICN), held in Washington, D.C., 26 – 28 September 2016.
2. Understaffing and the substitution of nurses is now a feature of all our health systems and, as a result, quality of care is compromised across all settings. We call on all governments to do more to educate and retain nurses and achieve a greater level of self-sufficiency in the supply of nurses.
4. We draw particular attention to the trend in most countries to minimize the cost of elder care through a combination of chronic under staffing, poor skill mix, low pay and privatization.
3. We call on all nations, national nurses associations and trade unions to implement the recommendations of the U.N. High-level Commission on Health Employment and Economic Growth² to pay *“proper attention to decent working conditions, job security and occupational health and safety. This will require setting and enforcing regulatory norms and standards in terms of safe working environments, working hours and minimum staffing levels for public and private providers, as well as decent and attractive levels of pay. The return on investment from the provision of decent work can be substantial; reduced costs associated with staff turnover and better health outcomes.”*
4. As nations strive for universal health coverage and equitable access to health workers, we call on our governments³ in partnership with nurses and other stakeholders to:
 - Promote the right to the highest attainable standard of health.
 - Provide integrated, people-centered health services free from stigma and discrimination.
 - Foster empowered and engaged communities.
 - Uphold the personal, employment and professional rights of all health workers, including safe and decent work environments.
 - Eliminate gender-based violence, discrimination and harassment.

¹ Australia, Canada, China, Denmark, Ireland, Japan, New Zealand, Sweden and United States.

² [U.N. High-Level Commission on Health Employment and Economic Growth](#) page 31

³ [WHO HRH Strategy 2030](#)

- Promote international collaboration and solidarity in alignment with national priorities.
 - Ensure ethical recruitment practices.
 - Mobilize and sustain political and financial commitment to inclusive health services.
 - Promote innovation and the use of evidence.
5. We condemn the persistent and targeted attacks on health personnel in conflict zones and support the call from ICN Chief Executive Officer⁴ that *“Respect for health services is one of the core values of international humanitarian law and the human right to health. The attacks on nurses, doctors and healthcare facilities in Syria and other nations in conflict must urgently stop, so they can continue to provide the care needed by their populations.”* We call for adherence by all nations to the UN Declaration 2268⁵
5. We renew our call on nurse leaders, trade unions and professional organizations to campaign for the use of tools, systems and processes to achieve safe staffing levels, decent working conditions, and better, safer future for patients and the nurses who care for them. And, we add to this call the need for employers to engage positively in this dialogue.

⁴ ICN and World Medical Association [Press release](#)

⁵ [UN resolution 2268](#)