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100-day countdown to International Nurses Day – setting course to reshape the global strategy for nursing 2021-2025

Geneva, Switzerland, 1 February 2021 – Today the International Council of Nurses (ICN) launches the 100-day countdown to International Nurses Day (IND 2021), 12 May 2021, with the theme “Nurses: A Voice to Lead – A Vision for Future Healthcare”.

The countdown coincides with a critical period in reshaping the World Health Organization’s (WHO) Global Strategic Directions for Nursing and Midwifery 2021-2025. Last week, ICN hosted webinars for its National Nurses Associations (NNAs) and Nursing Now groups as part of WHO’s consultation on the subject. The strategy is due to be discussed and adopted at the World Health Assembly, shortly after International Nurses Day 2021.

ICN President Annette Kennedy said the 100 days leading up to International Nurses Day 2021, and the subsequent launch of the new global strategy, are important for the global nursing family. She said nurses must assimilate the lessons learned so far from the COVID-19 pandemic and strive to help determine the shape of our healthcare systems for a post-COVID era.

Ms Kennedy said:

“The past year had provided heartache for so many people, not least for nurses, along with many painful lessons about what should have been done to prepare for and then deal with the pandemic.

‘Our NNAs and Nursing Now groups have already contributed to the [Independent Review on the Global Response to the Pandemic](#), led by Former New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark. Now they are looking to the future by influencing WHO’s next global strategy on nursing and midwifery.

‘The findings of these reports will build on last year’s [State of the World’s Nursing Report](#), which highlighted the deep fault lines in our health services: COVID-19 brutally exposed serious shortcomings in healthcare globally, particularly in our preparedness for such a pandemic.’

‘The pandemic has been terrible, but one day it will be over. The 100 days counting down to International Nurses Day provide an opportunity to pivot from simply reacting to the pandemic, to being proactive about the profession’s future. This is vital because I am not convinced that governments have taken on board the tsunami of nursing shortages that are coming their way. These shortages are real, and the probable consequences are terrifying: having ten million too few nurses will cause untold harm for decades to come if the problem is not addressed now. We all need to convince governments that urgent action is taken and hold them to account. We need investment and we need it now – it is a matter of life and death.”

On Friday, ICN held two webinars to discuss the WHO’s consultation document on the new strategic directions document, with input from WHO Chief Nursing Officer, Elizabeth Iro and WHO Nursing and Midwifery Technical Officer Carey McCarthy.

Information from the webinars, which were held twice to accommodate people in different time zones ([webinar 1](#), [webinar 2](#)), will be used by WHO to help shape the global nursing strategy over the coming four years.

Around 400 nurse leaders from more than 80 countries joined the webinars, which focused on nursing leadership, jobs, pre-registration education and practice.

ICN Chief Executive Officer Howard Catton, who chaired both webinars, emphasised the importance of the next Strategic Directions document in the post-COVID-19 era. He said as many nurses as possible should read it and give their feedback.

Mr Catton said:

“The theme of this year’s IND 2021 “Nurses: A Voice to Lead – A Vision for Future Healthcare” could not be more appropriate as we stand at this pivotal point in the history of our profession and our healthcare systems. The decisions in the next few months will determine the sort of world we want to live in.

‘The new WHO global strategic directions, to which our nurses have contributed, is arguably the most important there has ever been for the future of not just our profession but the health of the planet because, as the pandemic has shown us, they are indivisible.

‘Our NNAs and Nursing Now groups are providing leadership and a vision for the future of the profession. They are demanding action on jobs, education, leadership, and clinical practice. We must use the next hundred days to reset and to start to reshape the future of healthcare in a way that recognises the contribution nurses have made during the pandemic and honours the memory of the many nurses and other healthcare workers that we have lost.’”

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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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