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ICN reaction to U.S. backing of waiver on vaccine patents: “a game-changer that can save millions of lives”

Geneva, Switzerland, 6 May 2021 – The International Council of Nurses (ICN) welcomes the decision by the United States backing the waiver on COVID-19 vaccine patents to increase equity around the global roll out. ICN CEO Howard Catton said that ICN had been calling for more to be done on vaccine equity and the prioritisation of nurses and healthcare workers since vaccines became available and vocal in its criticism of the roll out to date.

Mr Catton said:

“ICN echoes WHO Director General Dr Tedros’s reaction to the US backing of the waiver when he calls the decision ‘historic’ and ‘a monumental moment in the fight against COVID-19.’ This is a potential game-changer which can save millions of lives.

‘Vaccine equity and prioritization of nurses and healthcare workers is a fundamental issue of morality, ethics and human rights and should be non-negotiable, instead we are confronted with grotesque inequity in the roll out of the vaccines.

‘The world needs to go further and quicker and therefore we very much welcome the United States’ backing for the WTO proposal to temporarily suspend COVID-19 vaccine patents because it is a fundamental move to accessing equity and protection. Additionally, we call again for countries who have over-ordered to share with countries most in need.

‘ICN remains in regular contact with our National Nurses Associations (NNAs) around the world, just this week we have been hearing from our colleagues in India where student nurses, most of whom have not been vaccinated, are being redeployed to the COVID-19 frontline. At the same time, we have the situation where in richer countries young people, not at high risk, are being vaccinated. Our student nurses on the frontline should be taking priority. India is far from the only country suffering the fall-out from this gross inequity. Our NNAs across the globe report a similar situation with many nurses in Africa and Latin America still not vaccinated.

‘Vaccines are a public good and that should be the principle that informs our approach.’”

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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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