

ICN Congress: Former UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown sends heartfelt message of support to the world's nurses

Gordon Brown calls nurses 'ambassadors of compassion'

Geneva, Switzerland, 3 November 2021 – The former UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown has pledged to ensure that nurses are recognised and acknowledged for the public service they do, the dedication they show and the difference they make to the world's health.

In a presentation to the International Council of Nurses (ICN) virtual Congress, Mr Brown, the newly appointed World Health Organization (WHO) Ambassador for Global Health Financing, also urged G20 nations to end vaccine inequity between the global north and south. ICN CEO Howard Catton and Mr Brown have been in regular contact in recent months over the issue of the slow roll out of vaccines across Africa and other parts of the developing world which is continuing to put nurses at serious risk.



Mr Brown expressed his sympathy and condolences about the many nurses who have died during the pandemic.

“No one ever forgets a nurse who has helped them back to health and comforted them when they are down, and I see nurses as the world's ambassadors for compassion. The tragedy is that so many nurses have lost their lives as they've tried to save lives, sacrificed their lives to the cause of better health.”

Mr Brown spoke about the terrible effects of global north-south divide in the supply of COVID-19 vaccines, with many high-income nations, especially in the northern hemisphere, having vaccinated 70% of their populations, while many low-income countries have only managed to vaccinate 3% of their populations, with only 6% of the population of Africa having been vaccinated so far.

He said the north-south divide means that countries in the global north are effectively hoarding unused vaccines, while those in the global south are struggling to get their vaccination programmes off the ground.

Speaking to the world's nurses Mr Brown said:

“You know the containment of infectious diseases is perhaps the purest example of a global public good. In a pandemic, nobody anywhere is safe until everyone everywhere is safe. It's in all our

interests that the whole world is vaccinated against a virus like COVID-19, and it should be in every government's interest to stop any country pursuing 'beggar thy neighbour' policies, that would restrict the flow of life-saving vaccines and any other medical equipment across the world."

Mr Brown called on the G20 Group of Nations to appoint a vaccine coordinator who would organise a month-by-month delivery programme that would divert the global north's unused vaccines to the needy nations in the global south, and ensure that the current 500 million shortfall of vaccines is eradicated as quickly as possible.

"Then nurses, health workers and the whole population can feel safe. Then, we can have vaccines for all, given to all in all countries: then the work of our nurses can be satisfactorily discharged."

The ICN Congress is currently underway virtually. For more information go to: <https://icncongress2021.org/>

Note for 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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