

# **ICN 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Declaration on the Future of Nursing: Bucharest 2024**

## **Preamble**

Recognizing the escalating challenges faced by national health systems in responding to increased demand for health care services, driven by factors such as population ageing, rising chronic diseases, and new threats such as climate change, public health crises, man-made emergencies, and conflicts.

Acknowledging the critical workforce challenges ahead including nurse shortages, uneven distribution, skill-mix imbalances, mobility and migration, and an ageing workforce, compounded by stress, burnout and workplace violence, leading to many nurses exiting the profession.

Reaffirming the commitment to nursing as the foundation of all health systems, playing a critical role in ensuring the well-being of populations worldwide.

And in light of the International Council of Nurses' (ICN) vision that the global community recognizes, supports and invests in nurses and nursing to lead and deliver health for all

Nursing leaders, gathered at ICN's 125th anniversary conference, in Bucharest, Romania, on 21-22 October 2024, made this Declaration.

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## **1. Increased and smarter public investment**

We reiterate our [ICN Charter for Change](#) call for investment in nursing and further advocate for strategically targeted public investment that aligns with technological advancements, leadership development, long-term workforce sustainability and focuses on prevention and health promotion.

- Allocating sufficient resources to ensure an adequate number of well educated nurses in health systems, including primary health care.
- Promoting policies that encourage effective, high-quality care and environmentally sustainable practices.
- Supporting the integration of multi-professional teams to improve collaboration in care delivery.

## **2. Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and Universal Health Coverage**

We call on governments to take urgent and strenuous efforts to follow the UHC2030 action agenda, [From Commitment to Action](#), which sets out the steps countries should take to make the urgent progress needed to achieve UHC by 2030. We emphasize the need for:

- Protecting and investing in the nursing profession to rebuild health systems that can deliver the SDGs and UHC to improve global health.
- Recognizing and valuing health and health care as an investment not a cost.
- Securing commitments for investment to maintain equitable and people-centred care.

### **3. Addressing global health challenges and the role of nurses in humanitarian disasters**

Recognizing that nurses are at the forefront of responses to growing global health challenges, including conflicts, natural disasters, pandemics, climate change and non-communicable diseases, and the resulting migration and refugee crises, we stress the importance of equipping nurses with the skills and resources to address these threats to health, including:

- Expanding the role of nurses in public health preparedness and response, ensuring that they are at the forefront of efforts to mitigate the health impacts of climate change, including the spread of infectious diseases, food and water insecurity, and heat-related illnesses, and developing nurse-led strategies to address these health impacts.
- Advocating for policies that support and protect nurses working in these high-stress, high-risk environments through proper resources, access to personal protective equipment, mental health support and professional recognition.
- Providing training for nurses to deliver culturally sensitive care to displaced and vulnerable populations, addressing their unique physical and mental health needs, including trauma and stress-related conditions.
- Promoting international collaboration to support nurse-led interventions in conflict zones, refugee camps and areas affected by conflict and climate change, ensuring timely access to health care for vulnerable populations and protecting the rights and health of displaced populations.
- Reorienting health systems towards health promotion, prevention and control of NCDs and mental health and increasing funding for action on NCDs and mental health services.
- Supporting ICN's #NursesforPeace campaign and the WHO's Global Health and Peace Initiative and condemning attacks against health care workers.

International Humanitarian Law must be respected and enforced in all conflict zones to ensure the safety and protection of all health care workers and facilities.

### **4. Strategic and sustainable workforce planning for the future**

Countries must focus on nurse workforce sustainability as an integral element in overall nurse workforce planning. We advocate for enhanced strategic workforce planning to secure a sustainable supply of nurses and leaders for the future:

- Promoting cross-sector collaboration to secure a sustainable supply of nurses for the future, including conducting comprehensive workforce assessments and data collection to anticipate current and future needs.
- Supporting health and education institutions to enhance inter-professional education and continuous professional development, and integrate the social determinants of health and sustainable health care practices.

- Strengthening regulation, accreditation and quality assurance of the nursing workforce.
- Strengthening workforce data systems to inform evidence-based policymaking, with a focus on improving workforce distribution, addressing skill-mix issues and reducing workforce imbalances.
- Implementing targeted retention strategies proven effective across career stages and regions, focusing on working conditions, career progression and professional support.
- Ethically managing international recruitment and migration, in line with the WHO Global Code of Practice, ensuring transparency and sustainability in migration policies.
- Prioritizing the retention and recruitment of nurses in underserved areas, including rural and remote communities.

All countries should aim to be self-sufficient in the supply of their nursing workforce.

## **5. Improving the working environment and expanding scope of practice**

Attractive working conditions, pay and career opportunities are key policy interventions which will improve retention and recruitment of the nursing workforce. We call for a renewed focus on the well-being and working conditions of nurses through:

- Ensuring safe, inclusive and adequately staffed working environments, focusing on physical and mental health protections, and providing nurses with the resources they need to do their jobs safely, effectively and efficiently.
- Enabling nurses to work to their full scope of practice, fully utilizing their skills, education and expertise.
- Addressing the gendered impacts of workplace risks, such as burnout and caregiving responsibilities.
- Promoting fair compensation and professional recognition that reflects the vital contributions of nurses to health care systems, and addresses gender inequalities, including pay gaps and the undervaluation of unpaid care work,
- Enforcing a zero-tolerance policy against any form of violence or abuse toward nurses.

## **6. Expanding leadership in health care**

In accordance with [WHO's State of the World's Nursing](#), we emphasize the critical need for nurses to be integrated into leadership roles at all levels of health care decision-making, and advocate for:

- Accelerating the appointment of nurse leaders in senior leadership positions in nursing, the health sector and beyond to strengthen nursing workforce governance and stewardship and contribute to health and social policy decisions.
- Ensuring nurses are actively engaged in leadership pathways, mentorship programmes and global health governance, fostering greater representation in health ministries, international agencies and professional associations.
- Promoting gender equity in leadership and decision-making roles, ensuring female nurses have equal opportunities in decision-making positions.
- Advocating for Government Chief Nursing Officers in every Country with appropriate authority and resources.

## **7. Harnessing new technologies and digital health**

In a rapidly evolving health care environment, we advocate for greater integration of digital tools and innovation in nursing practice:

- Investing in nurses' digital literacy and technological competencies to leverage telemedicine, AI and data-driven care models.
- Expanding the use of digital tools as well as access to digital health platforms to improve health care delivery, particularly in underserved areas.
- Supporting research and development in health technology that addresses the needs of individuals, families, communities and health care professionals to enhance the efficiency of nursing interventions and improve patient outcomes.

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We, the delegates of the ICN 125th anniversary conference in Bucharest, reaffirm the vital role nursing plays in advancing global health. Through this Bucharest Declaration, we pledge to work together in addressing the challenges facing nursing and health care systems, ensuring a strong, resilient and sustainable future for nursing and health worldwide.