

77th Session of the WHO Regional Committee for South-East Asia

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Agenda Item 9.2: Strengthening Health Workforce Education and Training in the Region (SEA/RC67/R6)

The International Council of Nurses (ICN) commends WHO South-East Asia and Member States for their progress in health workforce education under the Decade for Human Resources for Health (HRH). ICN emphasizes the critical role of a competent nursing workforce in achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Nurses, as key pillars of health systems, have proven vital in addressing recent health crises. To meet future needs, we must address education, regulation, and retention challenges.

ICN recommends several key actions:

- 1. Strengthening Nursing Education:** As outlined in the WHO Global Strategic Directions for Nursing and Midwifery, ICN advocates for a baccalaureate-level entry program for registered nurses as the foundation of nursing education. Furthermore, competency-based education should be prioritized, ensuring that nurses and other health professionals are trained based on real-world skills and competencies.
- 2. Enhancing Interdisciplinary Education:** The integration of interdisciplinary education is vital for strengthening health systems and fostering teamwork among different health cadres. ICN supports initiatives that encourage collaboration among nurses and other health workers, particularly in primary health care settings.
- 3. Ensuring Quality and Regulation of Nursing Education:** Effective regulation of nursing education programs is paramount to maintaining high standards of care. ICN urges Member States to establish and enforce robust regulatory frameworks that align nursing education with national health priorities.

4. **Continuing Professional Development (CPD):** ICN calls for greater investment in CPD programs to ensure the workforce remains current, competent, and capable of responding to emerging health threats.
5. **Investment in Nursing Education as a Strategic Driver:** ICN has concerns about replacing trained and registered nurses with a workforce that lacks equivalent training and regulatory standards, as this could potentially undermine the quality of care. Rather, we encourage the ongoing development of a well-educated and adequately supported nursing workforce.