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Agenda item 7.4 - Midterm Report on the Implementation of the Sustainable Health Agenda for the Americas 2018–2030

The International Council of Nurses welcomes discussions on the Sustainable Health Agenda for the Americas, focusing on investing in the health workforce. Nurses are vital to health systems, and improving recruitment, retention, and professional development is key to ensuring equitable, high-quality care.

We call on Member States to invest in strong educational systems, including expanded clinical placements, that prepare nurses to meet the evolving health needs of their populations. Investing in nursing education and training, in line with the World Health Organization's Strategic Directions for Nursing and Midwifery, is essential to building resilient health systems and improving patient outcomes.

Retention of nurses requires competitive salaries, safe work environments, and career development opportunities. The ICN's report *Sustain and Retain in 2022 and Beyond: The Global Nursing Workforce and the COVID-19 Pandemic* emphasizes that without adequate support, health systems risk losing skilled nurses, particularly in underserved areas.

We are also concerned that the regional maternal mortality ratio continues to suffer setbacks. Accelerated action is needed, including implementation of high-impact interventions. Nurses work closely with women, children, and adolescents across the life course. Beyond providing primary health services and lifesaving treatments, nurses improve the quality of care and

increase equitable access to essential health services that reduce maternal, newborn, and child mortality.

We highlight the migration of nurses from low- and middle-income countries to high-income countries, which can deplete their health workforces. Migrant nurses often face discrimination and barriers that limit their contributions. We support collecting detailed workforce data to better understand needs, migration trends, and health impacts.

In conclusion, investing in nursing education, equitable salaries, supportive work environments, and data-driven workforce planning is essential for recruitment and retention. By doing so, nurses are empowered to provide safe, high-quality care for many years, strengthening health systems and improving the health of all communities.