

# Statement from the International Council of Nurses



## *In support of the Korean Nursing Act*

Published 19 April 2022

The International Council of Nurses (ICN) strongly supports the proposed Korean Nursing Act and believes that a legal framework underpinning nurses and nursing practice is imperative for the protection of nurses and patients alike.

ICN believes that national laws and regulations are essential to supporting and strengthening the current nursing workforce and ensuring that the nurses are fit, ready and supported to address all the health challenges faced by people around the world.

The new Korean Nursing Act aims to ensure patient safety; improve recruitment and retention of nurses; establish clear regulatory and educational standards and processes; and ensure decent working conditions for nurses. It provides a clear framework to protect the definition of nursing, and establish staffing levels to ensure patient safety.

Dr Pamela Cipriano, ICN President, attended a recent rally in Seoul, South Korea in support of the Nursing Act. She said:

“ICN applauds the Korean Nurses Association and the three forward-thinking political parties in the Korean National Assembly who proposed the Nursing Act to ‘promote the health of the Korean people’.

‘Today, nursing is an independent profession which requires strong, independent legislation to regulate the complex and demanding work of nurses today. This Act provides clarity around what nurses do, who can call themselves a nurse, what competencies and education are required, the working conditions of nurses, as well as staffing levels required to ensure the safety and welfare of patients.’

Nurses play a key role as part of a multidisciplinary practice as recognised in the World Health Organization’s recent reports, the State of World’s Nursing and the Strategic Directions for Nursing and Midwifery. ICN, WHO and other organisations recognise the autonomous role of nurses and the ILO Nursing Personnel Convention states that “National laws or regulations shall specify the requirements for the practice of nursing and limit that practice to persons who meet these requirements.”

**Howard Catton, ICN Chief Executive Officer, who is currently in Seoul to show ICN's support to the Korean Nurses Association (KNA), said:**

**“The World Health Organization’s State of the World’s Nursing report clearly shows that nursing needs a clear and comprehensive legal framework and the Act proposed by the Korean Nurses Association and leading politicians in South Korea would advance that significantly.**

**‘ICN and the Korean Nurses Association reassure their medical colleagues that the Act in no way undermines the role of the physician. While clearly recognising the autonomy of nurses, the Nursing Act ensures that nursing work is performed within the scope of a nurse’s license according to the physician’s ‘guidance’ or ‘prescription’, and does not infringe on the physician’s responsibilities. Interprofessional collaboration ensures that patients receive the highest quality of care across all settings.**

**‘Many countries now recognise the importance of specialist and advance nursing roles to address the wide range and complexity of health challenges we see around the world, such as ageing populations, noncommunicable diseases, lack of access to primary health care and the need to rebuild post-COVID. Research shows that not only do advanced practice nursing roles deliver great outcomes, but patients also like them! We need to be supporting and investing in the development of autonomous nursing practice.**

**‘It is essential that the complex nature of modern nursing is recognised, supported and protected under a legal framework. The WHO Strategic Directions for Nursing and Midwifery 2021-2025 recommend that countries ‘Update and harmonize legislation and regulations to allow midwives and nurses to practice to the full extent of their education and training’ – and very many countries have already put robust, legal frameworks in place to support the development of nursing and ensure the safety of patients. ICN joins the KNA and members of the Korean National Assembly in fully supporting this new Korean Nursing Act.”**

**Howard Catton was co-chair of the first ever State of the World’s Nursing report which examined and reported on the existence of nursing regulations globally. Mr Catton said: "Whilst the results were very high for many regions the SE Asia region reported the lowest rate to indicators assessing the regulatory environment. For South Korea, the Nursing Law will help deliver on a modern, comprehensive and robust legal framework to support nurses and nursing practice and to ensure patient safety."**