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Strengthening emergency medical teams (EMTs) in the South-East Asia Region (SEA/RC71/R5)

5-9 September 2022 (Paro, Bhutan)

Honourable Chair, Distinguished Delegates,

The International Council of Nurses (ICN) acknowledges the World Health Organization South-East Asia report on 'Strengthening emergency medical teams (EMTs) in the South-East Asia Region.' We support the actions proposed as a means to reduce morbidity, mortality and disabilities due to disasters, outbreaks and other emergencies.

South-East Asia is one of the world's most natural disaster-prone regions. To support these crises, national and international EMTs are often deployed to assist disaster-affected populations. EMTs are teams of healthcare professionals composed most frequently of nurses, doctors, psychologists and others to provide direct clinical care to people affected by disasters and conflicts and to support local health systems. A competent workforce is a key part of any nation's disaster response and infrastructure.

In agreement with the WHO Global Health Emergency Health Workforce programme, any health professional coming from another country to practice health care in a disaster setting must be part of a team that is qualified, trained, equipped, resourced and meets minimum acceptable standards to practice. Historically, there have been concerns regarding the quality and standard of health care delivered by EMTs due to lack of preparedness. One core issue identified is health professionals not having the knowledge, skills and attributes relevant to the situation.

ICN believes that this issue can be addressed and the quality and professional practice of EMTs improved by developing and implementing a coherent and standardized approach to education and training. Analysis of the situation has found that the quality of education and training programmes related to disaster management offered by organisations and universities varies significantly across the world in scope and curriculum. Much of this has resulted from the lack of standards to guide education and training design. ICN has developed Core Competencies in Disaster Nursing as a common and universal standard for nurses to address this issue. These competencies have been developed and supported by international experts in the subject and relate to different levels of nursing including:

- any nurse who has completed a programme of basic, generalised nursing education and is authorised to practice by the regulatory agency of his/her country
- any nurse who is designated as a disaster responder within an institution, organisation or system
- a nurse who is prepared to respond to a wide range of disasters and emergencies and to serve on an EMT.



ICN believes there is a strong base for the adoption of these competencies by governments, EMT organisations, regulatory authorities and educators.

ICN represents the almost 28 million nurses, and the largest health professional group supporting EMTs around the world. ICN and members advocate for patients across the world, calling on member states to:

- Adopt and implement the ICN Core Competencies in Disaster Nursing for all levels of nursing, with a particular emphasis on nurses who serve in EMTs.

We look forward to working with you on this important programme.

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 nursing care for all and sound health policies globally.