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ICN warns that Universal Health Coverage will be a missed goal without immediate investment in nurses

Geneva, Switzerland, 12 December 2022 – The International Council of Nurses (ICN) is warning governments that the aim of providing Universal Health Coverage (UHC) by 2030 will not be achieved unless they take immediate and drastic action to recruit and retain millions more nurses.

The World Health Organization’s (WHO) UHC Day is an official United Nations-designated day established in 2012 to mark the unanimous endorsement of UHC as an essential priority for WHO Member States.

But in [2021](#), WHO said progress towards 2030 targets on UHC, which are part of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, had stalled in many countries. The global geopolitical situation has worsened since then, making the aspiration of UHC less likely to be achievable than previously anticipated.

ICN President Dr Pamela Cipriano, who is a member of the WHO’s UHC 2030 Steering Committee, said time is fast running out for the goal of UHC to have any chance of being achieved on time. Dr Cipriano said:

“Access to affordable healthcare, the cornerstone of Universal Health Coverage, is a human right, but it remains an unfulfilled dream for billions of people. Time is running out. We need urgent action to recruit and educate more nurses, provide funding for the positions required to meet health care needs, and support to retain our current nursing workforce, which suffered so much during the pandemic.

‘We need to develop a new, post-pandemic normal, that sees massive recruitment of nursing staff, accompanied by acknowledgement and respect for nurses and the life-changing contributions they can make if they are properly resourced and supported. Nurses must be directly involved in influencing needed changes in health systems and care delivery as they have a positive influence on every aspect of healthcare.

‘The link between our health, our lifestyles and our economic and personal security was starkly demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic. Governments must act now to ensure there are enough nurses working in the places they are needed most, to bring about the revolution in healthcare that is necessary to make UHC a reality, rather than an elusive goal. Health security is not a ‘nice to have’, it is the stabilizing force fundamental to safety and prosperity in all our communities across the globe.’”

There is also good evidence that nurse-led models of care are effective, efficient and reliable because nurses have the skillset to both design and deliver on health care. Investing in nursing brings massive benefits to individuals and communities, but lack of investment makes nurses’ jobs harder and creates the sort of industrial strife that is increasingly being seen around the world. Investment in health is clearly a driver for economic growth rather than a brake on it, and in that respect, is priceless.

UHC is fundamentally reliant on the work of nurses everywhere. Going forward, any new pandemic preparedness treaty must have healthcare workers at its core. It has been said many times that there can be no health care without healthcare workers, and so governments must invest more in their health workforce in order to achieve UHC.

Click [here](#) to join WHO's UHC campaign.

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Note to Editors

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 care for all and sound health policies globally.

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