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World's nurses need a pay rise and better working conditions, concludes new report

New international analysis of nurses' wages shows salary stagnation and fall in purchasing power

Geneva, Switzerland – 17 May 2018 – The International Centre on Nurse Migration (ICNM) today released an analysis of pay data collected by the International Council of Nurses (ICN) International and Asian Workforce Forums over 10 years (2006-2016). The findings show that many nurses around the world have experienced a real terms' fall in their purchasing power over the past 10 years. In Asia, there is also evidence of stagnation and a decline in pay in the last two years.

The recent UN Commission on Health Employment and Economic Growth made the case for investment in health services as a pre-requisite for economic prosperity rather than a drag on growth and identified the scale of the needs-based shortage for nurses worldwide. Given the relative fall in nurses' purchasing power over the last 10 years, there is an urgent need to give the world's nurses a pay rise and improve working conditions in order to address the attractiveness of the profession.

“While there are limitations to the data that ICN has collected which should be considered in the interpretation of the results, the findings clearly show significant periods of minimal pay growth across the world,” said Howard Catton, ICN Director of Nursing and Health Policy and report author. “With a predicted shortage of nine million nurses by 2030, and global health priorities such as Universal Health Coverage and NCDs it is vital for governments to invest in nursing and address issues to recruit and retain nurses, such as starting salaries and prospects of reasonable career and pay progression.”

The timeline coincides with the beginning of the global economic crisis in 2007/2008 and has continued until 2014. Whilst there is evidence of a pick-up in pay in the last two years in some countries, this appears to be driven by a limited number of countries, rather than being a trend across the board. Over the same period, turnover rates appear to have increased, due to the ageing nursing workforce, but also to heavy workloads, low compensation and poor working conditions which are driving nurses to leave the profession. These trends are set against the

backdrop of a global shortage of nurses and the recent UN Commission estimating that this equates to approximately nine million nurses.

Catton continued that “Despite the current and predicted shortage, it appears that pay is not being used as a lever to improve either the recruitment or retention of nurses. All governments have a responsibility to ensure the safety and security of their citizens and this includes having a sufficient number of healthcare professionals, because the consequences of not are detrimental to human health and mortality.”

The data was collected through the ICN annual Workforce Forums which bring together representatives from national nursing associations (NNAs) to probe and debate nursing workforce issues and working conditions. The Forums aim to stimulate thinking and enhances learning to ultimately develop proactive strategies. The NNAs that have attended the Asia or International Forums include ICN members from Canada, Denmark, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Ireland, Japan, Korea, Macau, Malaysia, New Zealand, Philippines, Singapore, Sweden, Taiwan, Thailand, and the USA. In total, the Forums cover a population of approximately nine million nurses.

The recent launch of the Nursing Now global campaign provides a generational opportunity to raise awareness of the value and contribution of nurses and to make the case for positive political choices and investment. This should include significant improvements in nurses’ pay and working conditions around the world.

ICN is also delighted to announce that Professor James Buchan, an internationally renowned global expert on the nursing workforce and health sector human resources, who reviewed the development of this report, will be [working in an advisory capacity with ICN to provide advice and support in relation to workforce and health policy. Additionally, Professor Buchan serves as a Strategic Advisory Group member of the International Centre on Nurse Migration (ICNM).

Note for 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.

The **International Centre on Nurse Migration (ICNM)** serves as a comprehensive knowledge resource created by CGFNS International, Inc. (formerly known as the Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools) in partnership with the International Council of Nurses (ICN). ICNM emphasizes the development, promotion, and dissemination of research, policy, and information on global nurse migration. This resource center features news, resources, and publications widely available to policy makers, planners, and practitioners.

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