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ICN calls on the public to embrace properly tested and regulated COVID-19 vaccines as soon as they are available

Geneva, Switzerland, 07 December 2020 – The International Council of Nurse’s (ICN) leadership is calling on the public to back the newly approved, tested and regulated COVID-19 vaccines that are beginning to be rolled out across the world.

ICN President Annette Kennedy and Chief Executive Officer Howard Catton have both expressed their willingness to be vaccinated at the earliest possible opportunity, and they are urging others to do likewise.

Ms Kennedy said: “The COVID-19 pandemic has killed more than 1.5 million people world-wide. It has closed down our lives, prevented people from visiting their most vulnerable loved ones in care homes, and kept family members from the bedsides of their dying relatives when they needed them most. It has taken a massive toll on our mental health as people have been forced to live isolated lives away from their families, friends and work colleagues.

‘I believe it is now our public duty and the responsibility of every one of us to be vaccinated as soon as possible to stop the spread of the virus and save lives, including those of frontline healthcare workers, who continue to be at high risk. ICN has reported that at least 1,500 nurses have died from the virus and we believe the true number will be very many more.

‘We are referring only to the vaccines approved by respected medicines’ regulatory authorities. The speed with which these vaccines have been created, tested, trialled and regulated is due to an unprecedented concerted global effort in which safety has been paramount. Let’s get the message out about the safety and necessity of having a COVID-19 vaccine, and make sure the public is not swayed by unfounded conspiracy theories and irresponsible scare-mongering.”

Mr Catton said, “We should recognise that vaccines have played a key role in combatting many other diseases, including polio, smallpox and measles, and that COVID-19 represents a similar threat. We have a choice: to continue to live in fear with our freedoms curtailed, or to do our civic duty for the common good and, in a spirit of national and global solidarity, embrace vaccines that have been tested and regulated as both safe and effective. If people shun the vaccines our ICUs and hospitals will continue to be overrun, and our nurses and other healthcare workers will be put at further unnecessary risk.

‘Having the vaccines is only half the story: we need a global vaccination programme, led by experienced senior nurses, and the staff to deliver the vaccine itself. Nurses are at the forefront of administering and delivering immunisation programmes globally, and nurses everywhere must be a priority group for receiving the vaccine so that they can carry on their lifesaving work.”

‘However, let’s be clear; vaccination programmes will only succeed if the vast majority of the population take the vaccines, otherwise we face many more years of disruption and the spectre

of regular lockdowns that will destroy our economies and prevent us from exercising our civil liberties. We talk about the 'new normal of COVID', but everyone can influence what that new reality will be by remaining informed and listening to genuine public health experts, and taking the vaccine, as I will do when it is my turn."

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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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