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**EMBARGO until 00:01 on May 12, 2020 CEST**

**International Council of Nurses: Nursing the World to Health**

**In the middle of COVID-19 pandemic, International Nurses Day is a call to action as well as a celebration**

**Geneva, Switzerland, 12 May 2020** – On this day, the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Florence Nightingale, the world needs to focus on the unique role of nurses, give thanks for their selfless contribution in the struggle to tackle COVID-19 and call for investment. We must never be as globally under-prepared for a pandemic again.

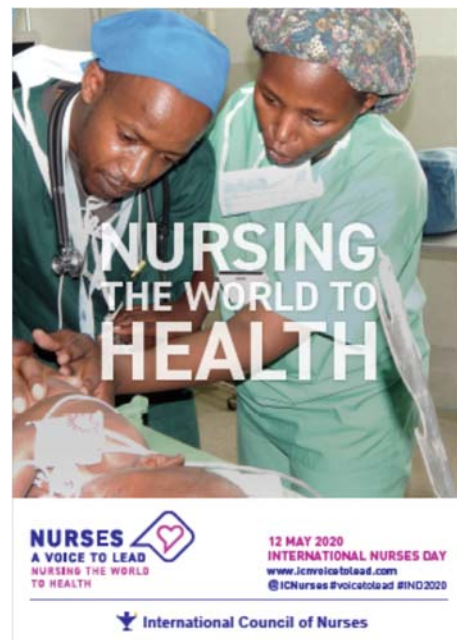
Each year, the International Council of Nurses (ICN) leads the celebrations on International Nurses Day, but in 2020 it has a special significance because this is the first ever International Year of the Nurse and the Midwife, and the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of one of modern nursing's founders, Florence Nightingale.

This year's theme, *Nurses: A Voice to Lead – Nursing the World to Health*, could not be more appropriate and demonstrates how nurses are central to addressing a wide range of health challenges, including the current COVID-19 pandemic.

As the world's 20-plus million nurses carry out their work, often in difficult and dangerous conditions, **ICN is calling on governments everywhere to acknowledge the crucial role nurses play in society and pledge to ensure nurses' health and safety at work, and to improve their pay and working conditions.**

ICN President Annette Kennedy said:

“The pandemic has starkly revealed the fragility of the lives we have led up to this point and the intimate connection between our health and our wealth and wellbeing. It has also shown the weakness of many healthcare systems, which would be greatly



strengthened if governments took urgent action to address the current global shortfall of six million nurses.

‘COVID-19 is forcing nurses to work under great physical and psychological strain, in situations where a lack of proper Personal Protective Equipment is adding fear to the other strong and exhausting emotions they are experiencing.

‘Thousands of nurses have become sick, and we now know that hundreds have died from this virus. It goes without saying that no nurse should ever die as a result of doing their job, and this situation should never happen again. We will remember the nurses who have died, and the best way to honour their loss is to ensure that the legacy of 2020 is a stronger nursing workforce, with better access to vital equipment and pay and working conditions that reflect the high esteem that nurses are held in by the general public.’

ICN Chief Executive Officer Howard Catton said governments should take the lead from their citizens, who have shown their appreciation of the nursing profession and invest in the future of nursing. For his video message please click [here](#).

‘The State of the World’s Nursing [report](#) which I co-chaired on behalf of ICN, tells us to invest in nursing education, jobs and leadership. Our International Nurses Day publication, [Nursing the World to Health](#), shows what is already being done, and our [Advanced Practice Guidelines](#) highlight the massive potential that nursing has to expand healthcare and ensure health for all.

‘We now have the roadmap that we must show to politicians and policymakers and say, ‘here is a better way, this is what must be done, and nursing is a solution.’

‘And if the politicians say they can’t afford it as economies around the world falter, we say to them, for the sake of the people you serve, for their lives, their economic security and their freedom even to walk in the park, you must invest in nursing.

‘People who have recovered from COVID-19, whether they are prime ministers or ordinary people, will not forget. And for those who have died, a nurse may have been the last voice they heard, hand they touched or face they saw, and their families will not forget.

‘Right around the world, people have gone out of their way to express their gratitude for nurses, and we want to join them in thanking nurses for all they have done. Because when the virus stripped us of almost everything we took for granted, nurses showed us what is most important to us all: life, people and those we love.

'We want to wish all 20-plus million nurses a happy International Nurses Day as they continue to nurse the world to health.'

**International Nurses Day** is celebrated around the world every 12 May, the anniversary of Florence Nightingale's birth. ICN commemorates this important day each year with the production and distribution of the International Nurses' Day (IND) resources and evidence. Go to <https://2020.icnvoicetolead.com/> to access the IND toolkit, posters, logo and case studies. Join us today to show your support: #IND2020

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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.

For more information please contact Gyorgy Madarasz, Press Officer at [madarasz@icn.ch](mailto:madarasz@icn.ch)

Tel: +41 22 908 01 16

[www.icn.ch](http://www.icn.ch)

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