



Ban Ki-moon says nurses are key to achieving Sustainable Development Goals and calls on governments to invest in nurses

Former UN Director General addresses global nursing congress

Geneva, Switzerland, 3 November 2021 – Mr Ban Ki-moon, former Secretary General of the United Nations, streamed into the International Council of Nurses (ICN) Congress today to give a keynote speech on *Nursing's role in delivering global health and strengthening health systems*.

Speaking about his work during his term as UN Secretary General in establishing the UN Sustainable Development Goals and creating “Every Woman, Every Child”, the global strategy for women’s, children’s and adolescents’ health, Mr Ban called on governments and leaders to invest in nurses, saying

“[Nurses] are the key for achieving the SDGs and leaving no one behind. Indeed, ladies and gentlemen, nurses and health experts like yourselves, are indispensable for mobilising cooperation, innovation, the delivery of healthcare in all settings for all, rich and poor, young and old, citizens and migrants. We all share a common destiny rooted in health, sustainability and prosperity let us expend our efforts to realise this shared destiny in years to come.

‘Despite the current challenges that we face, if we work together under the spirit of partnership, innovation, sustainability and the commitment to expanding and delivering health care of all, we will not only persevere during this era of uncertainty, we will thrive...Together we can end this terrible pandemic which has significantly impacted each and every nurse around the world and has tragically taken the lives of 115 000 health care workers.

‘I urge you to keep going, but please look after yourselves, including your mental health. Individuals and communities, nations and the UN are all counting on the continued, valiant effort of nurses and their essential partners. Your work is crucial in strengthening the capabilities of health and care delivery systems to cope with and raise preparedness for future pandemics, climate shocks, and expanded primary care needs.’”

Mr Ban is one of several high-profile speakers attending the ICN virtual Congress. Yesterday, the Right Honourable Helen Clark led a panel discussion on the global response and lessons learned from COVID-19 pandemic with Annette Kennedy, ICN President; John Arne Røttingen, Ambassador for Global Health, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norway, and Dr Mara van Kerkhove, COVID-19 Technical Lead, World Health Organization.

Later today, Lauren Underwood, registered nurse and US Congresswoman, and Peggy Vidot, nurse and Minister of Health for the Seychelles, will speak on how nursing leadership can transform public health and the health workforce. Also today, the ICN Congress will hear a discussion on *Gender equality and empowering women* with Michelle Bachelet, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and former President of Chile; Dr Roopa Dhatt, Executive Director and Co-founder of Women in Global Health; Mariam Jalabi, Representative of the Syrian Opposition Coalition to the United Nations and co-founder of the Syrian Women's Political Movement; and Dr Nomafrench Mbombo, Western Cape Minister of Health, South Africa,

The Congress concludes tomorrow with further high profile speakers including Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director General of the World Health Organization, and Guy Ryder, Director General of the International Labour Organisation

To access recordings of the plenary sessions, and the rest of the ICN Congress go to: <https://congress2021.icnevents.online/>.

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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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