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Nurses' role in sustainable health care, disasters and conflicts highlighted at International Council of Nurses' Congress

Barcelona, Spain; Geneva, Switzerland; 30 May 2017 – The 2017 Congress of the International Council of Nurses, the world's largest gathering of nurses, moved into its second day yesterday as nurses heard global experts speak on key issues of today, including sustainable health care, empowering women, climate change, disaster nursing, and globalisation.

The day started with an update of the work of the United Nations High-Level Commission on Health Employment and Economic Growth by ICN's President, Dr Judith Shamian, who is one of the Commissioners. The Commission has 10 recommendations to transform the health workforce, which include, amongst others, creating jobs, maximizing women's economic participation, scaling up education; reforming health service delivery models; harnessing the power of technology, promoting partnerships and cooperation; and undertaking robust research. "Health is not an expense, but an investment based on evidence and the global community," said Dr Shamian.



In a powerful plenary session, the Honourable Julia Duncan Cassell (left), Liberia's Minister of Gender, Children and Social Protection, spoke about the importance of nurses' participation in the political process. Referring to the incredible work of Liberian nurses during the Ebola crisis, and recognizing those who gave their lives, the Minister said "Let me urge all you nurses to continue your good work. You will see life begin and end. You will cry a lot; you will laugh a lot. That is what being a nurse is."

The focus then moved on to climate change, public health and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Rowaida Al Ma'aitah (right), Vice President of the Jordan National Council for Women's Health, spoke about leadership and the transformation of nursing education. Noting that economic development is a challenge for all countries, Dr Al Ma'aitah stressed "We have to invest and we have to employ in order to take countries forward."





Dr Barbara Sattler (left), Professor of Public Health at the University of San Francisco spoke about the impact of climate change on health, and emphasized that "we need to look at climate change through the lens of social justice - a natural lens for nurses to look through". She added, "We can't have healthy people on a sick planet!"



The main session in the afternoon looked at disaster preparedness, response and resilience, with presentations by speakers with three different experiences in the area of disaster care. Dr Ian Norton (right), the Head of the World Health Organization's Foreign Medical Teams spoke about delivering health care services in times of natural disasters, armed conflicts, disease outbreaks, and terrorist attacks. Highlighting the value of the nursing workforce in these teams, WHO has adopted ratios of three nurses per doctor and eight nurses per bed in their core standards for emergency teams. "Good intentions aren't enough," said Dr Norton. "A good heart is not enough, and a willingness to help is not enough You need to be trained and self-sufficient as part of a team rather than an individual."



Dr Pilar Fernández Fernández (left), First Vice President of the Spanish General Council of Nursing, echoed Dr Norton's point, saying "They have to be trained in order to take decisions at a scene where everyone wants to just flee and get away. They have to stay there and cope with suffering, with death. So they have to be ready due to the training they have received."

Dr Fernández Fernández talked about Spain's long experience in the area of disaster nursing, "The Spanish Council of Nursing has had a training centre for 27 years that provides both post graduate and continuing education with is key to react appropriately in such circumstances". The Council has trained over 11 thousand nurses specialized in emergency situations.



The final speaker of the session on disaster preparedness was Dr Aiko Yamamoto (right), President of the Japanese Society of Disaster Nursing, who shared the experience of disaster nursing in Japan and the incredible advances in preparation and education of nurses in this field.

Towards the end of the day a special panel discussion was held with presidents of national nursing associations from Canada, Denmark, Malawi, New Zealand and Rwanda. They made contributions around the positive and negative issues and challenges in relation to globalisation, including environmental impact, workforce mobility,

political implications and human rights issues. The general consensus was that globalisation is an issue which NNAs and ICN need to engage with in order to raise the nursing voice in debates on the topic.

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.

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