

ICN brings strong messages on nursing and global health workforce action to this week's UN General Assembly

ICN's highlights major oversight in global strategy to tackle NCDs: the global nursing and health workforce

NEW YORK, NY, UNITED STATES, September 23, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The International Council of Nurses (ICN) brings the nursing voice to this week's United Nations 80th General Assembly (UNGA 80) in New York. ICN is advocating for urgent action to address shortages and strengthen the world's nursing and health workforce as the only way to achieve the UN's major health goals, including crucial targets to reduce noncommunicable diseases (NCDs).

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As UN Secretary-General António Guterres emphasized in his opening remarks, UNGA 80 takes place at a time of deepening global crises and health challenges, including

rising conflicts and geopolitical tensions, a worsening climate crisis, and growing inequalities. UNGA this year must also respond to financing pressures and restructuring of multilateral and global health institutions including the World Health Organization (WHO).

ICN's delegation, led by CEO Howard Catton, will ensure the world's 30 million nurses are heard at this vital decision-making forum. The delegation will attend important High-Level Meetings, including the High-Level on Noncommunicable Diseases (NCDs) on Thursday 25 September, as well as hosting and presenting at side events, delivering strong messages on what is needed to enable nursing workforces to address all of these challenges.

ICN's core messages at UNGA this year include:

1. NCDs: The major health focus at UNGA 80 is the High-level Meeting on NCDs and Mental Health. ICN has strongly critiqued the exclusion of nurses and the health workforce from WHO's NCD financing 'best buys' report, which will inform the UN NCD Declarations. ICN is bringing the clear message that the UNGA Political Declaration must make ambitious commitments to address NCDs by strengthening the health and nursing workforce as the heart of NCD

prevention, management, and response in primary health care.

2. Mental health: Building a strong, well supported mental health nursing workforce enabled to deliver person-centred, primary health care is vital to advance global mental health goals. Urgent action is also needed to address health workforce stress, burnout, and lack of mental health supports.

3. Equitable nursing workforces and migration: A new WHO EURO region report reveals the scale of inequitable international migration and recruitment of health workers. ICN is advocating for fair practices including proportional compensation to protect poor source countries from the loss of their health workforces and the resources they have invested in training them.

4. The nursing voice is critical on all key UN objectives: Major UNGA 80 agenda items include peace, climate, gender equity, financing for development, AI and digital transformation. Nurses have vital insights and contribute to advancing goals in all of these areas, meaning that investing in nursing is crucial to all of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

ICN CEO, Howard Catton, remarked:

"ICN is bringing the clear message to UNGA 80 that without immediate action to strengthen the nursing workforce, we risk failing to achieve every major health target before us, including rising chronic diseases. We are already far off track on the vast majority of the SDGs, and July's UN High-level SDGs Forum committed to addressing the global shortfall of health workers, including investing in retention and working conditions, as absolutely vital to achieving our global goals. 'Nurses must work together like never before to hold leaders to these statements and ensure that the UNGA Noncommunicable Diseases High-Level recognizes regulated health professionals as the key to preventing and responding to NCDs and other physical and mental health challenges — and produces firm commitments to support them. Although we welcomed the new report WHO published ahead of UNGA, which made a strong case for investment in tackling noncommunicable diseases, there was a glaring omission in not recognizing that nurses and the health workforce are essential and central to bringing about meaningful change. The United Nations General Assembly must ensure that all governments commit to addressing shortages and inequities in the nursing workforce.

'This must include tackling the stark reality of inequitable nurse migration. WHO's new EURO report last week revealed the scale of the issues facing us, with several wealthy nations, including Germany, Ireland and the UK among others, increasingly relying on nurses educated in low-income nations. The savings richer nations accrue through international recruitment must be recognized and addressed through fair compensation mechanisms.

'For a country like the UK, with 23% or ~180,000 foreign-trained nurses, that could mean a saving of £9 billion they would have spent if they'd educated those nurses domestically. Truly ethical migration must proportionally give back to low-income source countries for the loss of their nurses.

'Investing in fair, equitable, sufficient, and well-supported nursing workforces in all countries worldwide must be the cornerstone of any strategy to address NCDs and every other health challenge."

On Saturday 27 September, ICN will host a significant side event, "Shaping Global Health Policy through Nursing Leadership" alongside, NYU Rory Meyers College of Nursing, bringing together nursing leaders, national nursing associations, and international nursing organizations to advance the role of nursing in global health and increase the impact of nurse advocacy at UNGA80.

Richard Elliott
International Council of Nurses
+41 79 900 55 43
[email us here](#)

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