Governments must act now to build a pandemic-ready health workforce, says WHPA

GENèVE, GE, SWITZERLAND, September 25, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- As world leaders meet in New York today for the UN High-Level Meeting on Pandemic Prevention, Preparedness and Response (PPPR), the World Health Professions Alliance (WHPA) is calling on governments to act on their commitments to strengthen and invest in the health workforce — before the next pandemic strikes.

> If health professionals are already understaffed and overstretched outside of emergencies, where are they to find the additional capacity required in an emergency?"
>
> *ICN CEO Howard Catton*

Chronic understaffing, poor working conditions and unsustainable investment are leaving health systems ill-prepared for the workforce demands of a pandemic, WHPA warns.

Represented in New York by leaders from the International Council of Nurses (ICN), WHPA is urging governments to recognise that pandemic preparedness starts with the workforce. Health professionals cannot be expected to meet extraordinary demands during a crisis if they are already overstretched in routine care. With women making up around 70% of the global health workforce and over-represented in lower-paid, undervalued jobs, they are on the front lines of a workforce crisis that risks placing an even greater burden on women during emergencies.

"If health professionals are already understaffed and overstretched outside of emergencies, where are they to find the additional capacity required in an emergency? During COVID-19, our colleagues were pushed to their limits and beyond, and governments cannot allow this to happen again.

"Governments have made commitments to support and invest in the health workforce in the Political Declaration at the HLM. Now those commitments must be turned into action, so we are not caught out by the next pandemic," said Howard Catton, WHPA Chair and CEO of ICN.

WHPA is calling for governments to strengthen workforce capacity through adequate staffing levels, decent working conditions, sustainable financing and meaningful support for health professionals' health and wellbeing.

The Political Declaration is due to be adopted by Heads of State and Government today, 25

September, at the second UN High-Level Meeting on PPPR, held during the 81st UN General Assembly. WHPA welcomes the declaration's commitment to "develop, recruit, strengthen, protect, safeguard, and invest in a multidisciplinary, skilled, adequate, trained, health and care workforce".

The challenge now is implementation. A commitment to pandemic preparedness must translate into investment in the people who deliver health and care every day.

ICN is also participating in the UN General Assembly and has convened a side event on pandemic-ready health systems, bringing together leaders from across the health professions and wider health sector. The event highlighted the importance of interdisciplinary workforce solutions and of building strong, connected and adaptable health workforces within healthier and more resilient health systems.

richard elliott
International Council of Nurses
+41 79 900 55 43
email us here

This press release can be viewed online at: https://www.einpresswire.com/article/945188319

EIN Presswire's priority is source transparency. We do not allow opaque clients, and our editors try to be careful about weeding out false and misleading content. As a user, if you see something we have missed, please do bring it to our attention. Your help is welcome. EIN Presswire, Everyone's Internet News Presswire™, tries to define some of the boundaries that are reasonable in today's world. Please see our Editorial Guidelines for more information.
© 1995-2026 Newsmatics Inc. All Right Reserved.