



International Council of Nurses  
*The global voice of nursing*

## **Solutions through solidarity, sustainability and science**

Mrs Hoi Shan Fokeladeh  
Senior Policy Advisor  
International Council of Nurses (NGO in Roster Consultative Status)

Your excellencies, esteemed delegates, observers and colleagues,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of the CoNGO member organisations on the topic of “Solutions through solidarity, sustainability and science.”

We all know the power and benefits of science and how important it is to improve health and well-being. During the COVID-19 pandemic, scientists contributed to the rapid production and clinical development of vaccines to mitigate the crisis. In the meantime, the accelerated growth of digital technologies and data analytics facilitated pandemic response and telemedicine in an emergency.

Science once again has proven to be the catalyst for the transformation of health and healthcare, and the pandemic has shown science at its best. However, it has also revealed the limitations of science, such as vaccine inequity and vaccine hesitancy. The World Health Organization has termed the rise of an epidemic of misleading information as infodemic. Nurses, the most trusted profession making up the majority of the health workforce, are a significant source of information and well-placed to dispel misinformation and boost confidence in vaccination.

Apart from the critical advocacy role nurses perform to promote science, they also advance science and ensure that the individual and community voice is heard in the care process. They can advocate sufficient resources to ensure the human aspects of care are not neglected. In the pandemic, nurse leaders are a central component for driving alignment and implementation change at the unit level with the use of evidence-based strategies.

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the value of nurse leaders in health systems. Evidence shows that when governments invest in the nursing workforce, economies grow, and the overall health outcomes of their population improve. For this to happen, nurse leaders need to be in places that will enable them to influence health policies and the allocation of resources at the highest levels.

The reality is that the worldwide shortages of nurses and healthcare workers, worsened by the pandemic, and damages inflicted on healthcare systems by the pandemic, are having grave consequences and will continue to severely impact the ability of health systems to function effectively to provide high-quality care and achieve universal health coverage.

With a global shortage of six million nurses and 18 million healthcare workers before the pandemic, we are now seeing increased turnover rates which are highly likely to increase these numbers. Countries need to take urgent action to safeguard, protect, invest in and sustain a skilled and robust health workforce as part of the concrete solutions to our shared goals.

To reflect on the global health crisis, we learned that science could change the course of a pandemic. We also learned that the health workforce is key to driving and implementing science. Increasing health system readiness and resilience requires commitment and investment, which needs to happen now.