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Climate change threatens healthcare systems: International Council of Nurses calls on governments to act now

Geneva, Switzerland, 14 November 2019 – The International Council of Nurses (ICN) calls on governments to take immediate action to tackle climate change, after latest Lancet Countdown report reveals impending health crisis for future generations.

Climate change poses the single biggest health risk to humanity with devastating damage to people's health and livelihoods if urgent action is not taken.

Details in the latest *Lancet Countdown: Tracking Progress on Health and Climate Change* [report](#) show how the lives of every child born this year will be profoundly affected by climate change throughout their lifetimes.

ICN Chief Executive Officer Howard Catton said nurses are keenly aware of its effects and are striving to mitigate them wherever they can.

“Human health and wellbeing, the prosperity of our communities and the effectiveness of our health systems are all being damaged by climate change. It is also a serious threat to global development with the potential to undermine decades of public health gains.”

“Wherever nurses work they see the impact of climate change on individuals, healthcare services and health systems. They see people with respiratory and cardiac problems because of poor air quality, they see others displaced by severe weather events losing their homes, land and livelihoods. The impact of all this on mental health and wellbeing is severe, and people living with chronic health conditions, especially children and older people, are affected most of all.”

“As the Lancet report says, everyone on the planet must do their bit to halt global warming, and nurses can take a leading role in building climate resilient health systems, engaging in health and climate research, and influencing local, national and international policy responses.”

Mr Catton said the demand for well-educated and trained nurses is likely to increase as the incidence and prevalence of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) rises across the globe in response to global warming.

“Climate change is likely to further increase demand for nurses who can care for increasing populations of people with worsening NCDs who will need to manage their conditions and control lifestyle factors to prevent or delay progressing morbidity from NCDs.”

Information for nurses on this issue can be found in ICN's position statement, [Nurses, Climate Change and Health](#)

ICN is a member of the [Global Health and Climate Alliance](#).

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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