

Speaker: Regina Yuen

Your excellencies, honourable members and peers,

My name is Regina Yuen, representing Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society of Nursing, speaking on behalf of our 100,000 members. As the world's largest healthcare workforce, nurses are essential to advancing the SDGs, particularly Good Health and Well-Being. Nurses deliver 90% of global health services, and research from the Lancet shows that a stronger nursing workforce directly correlates with better health outcomes and higher life expectancy.

Unfortunately, healthcare remains a privilege, not a universal right. Pandemics, climate-driven disasters, and humanitarian crises have exposed the devastating consequences of inequitable access to healthcare. According to the Global Health Workforce Alliance, 1 in 5 people worldwide still lacks access to essential health services. This gap has been further exacerbated by resource constraints and inequality. We urge all member states to prioritize the implementation of universal health coverage to ensure equitable access to quality care, irrespective of geography or socioeconomic status.

Strengthening health systems requires sustainable, long-term planning, and investment in the workforce. The International Council of Nurses estimates that 13 million additional nurses are needed by 2030 to fill the global shortage and meet demands. According to a report from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), each additional nurse per 1,000 people is associated with a 7% reduction in maternal mortality and a 10% reduction in neonatal mortality.

Member states must invest in healthy work environments to attract and retain skilled health professionals as research shows that better work environments boost retention, which strengthens both the workforce and national health systems. The economic impact is significant; the International Labour Organization estimates that for every \$1 invested in health, there is an \$8 return in terms of increased productivity.

Health is more than just the treatment of illness—it encompasses childhood development, living conditions, employment, and societal participation. Only through collaboration of governments, the private sector, NGOs, researchers, and at the heart of it, communities—can we create a sustainable and equitable future for all.