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## **Nurses agree Universal Health Coverage is Right, Smart and Overdue!**

***International Council of Nurses reaffirms commitment to ensuring  
access to quality health services***

**Geneva, Switzerland; 11 December 2015** - In recognition of Universal Health Coverage Day on 12 December, the International Council of Nurses (ICN) reaffirms its continuing commitment to ensure that every person, everywhere, has access to quality health services without suffering financial hardship. The ultimate success of every healthcare system, including its ability to serve all citizens, depends heavily on nurses. Adequate numbers of competent, well prepared nurses, able to practise to their full scope, are critical to the achievement of Universal Health Coverage (UHC).

As a partner in the [Global Coalition for Universal Health Coverage](#), ICN joins the call for every country to deliver on promises to achieve UHC. No one can be left behind.

“Nursing expertise is pivotal to addressing the complexity of factors related to providing equitable access to quality health care, according to the needs of the population,” said Dr Judith Shamian, ICN President. “It is essential that nurses are involved in policy dialogue and decision-making regarding the planning, development and evaluation of services and policies.”

ICN welcomes the recent World Health Organization/World Bank Group report<sup>[1]</sup> which indicates that 400 million people worldwide are still waiting for essential health services. The report also states that 17% of people in low- and middle-income countries are pushed or pushed further into poverty (US\$2/day) by health spending. Nurses, as the single largest component of the health workforce, are well positioned to do more with less while providing quality care and optimal patient outcomes. Unfortunately, at times of economic austerity nurses are often the first to be reduced which is detrimental to patient safety and quality of care.

Three years ago, on 12 December 2012, the United Nations unanimously endorsed a resolution<sup>[2]</sup> urging governments to ensure universal access to quality health services without financial hardship. Now, the United Nations has enshrined universal health coverage as a cornerstone of the Sustainable Development Goals.

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.