

DRAFT SPEAKING NOTE FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE MINISTER ON THE OCCASION OF COMMEMORATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL NURSES DAY 2022

INTRODUCTION

International Nurses Day is celebrated worldwide, on the anniversary of Florence Nightingale's birth, on May 12. The International Council of nurses (ICN) commemorates this important day each year which acknowledges and celebrates the commitment and bravery of nurses and celebrates the rich history and tradition of nursing.

The theme for this year is **_Nurses: A voice to lead – Invest in nursing and respect rights to secure global health.**

In South Africa, we would like to join the people around the world who are applauding the work of nurses and midwives. Our nurses deserve our highest respect for their enormous contribution improving the health of our society. This is a special tribute to all nurses and midwives who work with selfless commitment while striving to maintain the highest professional standards. Nurses deserve recognition for their hard work, as they are the people who see human beings at their best and worst situations. The recognition and appreciation of

nurses goes a long way to improve morale and impacts positively on their work.

First, I would like to expand on the 'character' of nurses.

- As agents of change, nurses are resilient, this was magnified during the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic where they had to adjust to changes and effectively manage the pandemic.
- The dynamism of nurses was seen when they had to create isolation wards within the hospitals.
- The flexibility of nurses was visible when they had to see themselves moving away of their day-day to day activities and focusing on outbreak response.
- These men and women strengthened community outreach while screening to curb the spread of the pandemic.
- During the peak of the pandemic, when everybody was at home during lockdown, nurses were at the coal face doing case findings and strengthening covid-19 testing.
- In this time of the pandemic, nurses took strain as they saw family, colleagues and patients dying before them. They did their best to uphold the rights of patients, the priorities of the department and ensuring provision of quality nursing services to their patients.
- Many nurses lost their lives to Covid, and some are still living with the complications thereof.

Second, investment in nursing is essential as nurses play a pivotal role in the provision of quality care in health care establishments. Investing in nurses improves their knowledge and productivity as they gain confidence in what they do. As a department we are committed to investing in nursing as a means to respecting human rights in providing global health. We have witnessed how investing in nurses has proved to be effective in nurse-led models such Nurse Initiated Management and Administration of Treatment (NIMAART) in the HIV program. In addition, the role played by nurses in male medical circumcision in collaboration with traditional leaders has been very successful.

The department strives towards improving the conditions of service of all health care workers in general and nurses in particular. An example is the finalization of the electronic payment of statutory fees to the South African Nursing Council (SANC). This has ensured that nurses do not have to travel far to make payments and removes the risk of non-payment and deregistration of nurses. Other matters which are currently receiving attention is the national nurse's uniform which is at the stage of preparation for procurement, token of appreciation for health personnel, discussions on the filling of posts and a clear plan for replacement of attrition of nurses due to age.

During the pandemic it was apparent that nurses should be empowered to look after patients with Covid 19. To this end a short online course was offered by the Forum for University Deans in South Africa (FUNDISA) to nurses to improve their skills in management of patients with covid from the arrival at the hospital, to Critical Care Units and back home. More than 1000 nurses from all provinces were upskilled to ensure that our patient are care for by appropriately trained and competent nurses.

To increase the number of specialist nurses we are working on a data set which will quantify the number of specialist nurses in service currently. The aim is to inform the development of training plans towards increasing the production of specialist nurses in alignment with the burden of disease, the health needs of the country and Universal Health Care. Investing in training of specialist nurses prioritizing critical care nurses (ICU) and advanced Midwifery is important.

As you are aware, nursing education has migrated to higher education, and we are pleased to acknowledge the new graduates for the 1-year Higher Certificate programme. Nursing programmes are now accredited by both the South African Nursing Council as regulator and custodian of nursing, as well as by the Council on Higher Education.

Similar to all other countries, South Africa experiences shortage of skilled nursing personnel. The Nursing Strategy 2020/21-2025/26 provides an intent and an opportunity to address challenges in the profession. Goal 1 of the strategy advocates for effective future nursing workforce planning. NDoH in collaboration with the Hospital Association of South Africa (HASA) conducted a future health workforce planning project to determine health workforce needs and build a roadmap for job creation to alleviate unemployment. As a follow up, NDoH is currently working with the Office of the Presidency on a project to improve forecasting supply and demand and improve workforce planning for nurses.

Investing in professional development remains a critical area for the Department. To improve the efficiency of nurses and improve patient health outcomes, NDoH is working with SANC in the piloting of the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in five provinces, Gauteng, KZN, WC, LP and EC. The Knowledge Hub (which is a zero-based training platform in the Department) will play a pivotal role as a resource for the presentation of webinars for all nurse and health care workers.

- We are also working on the establishment of Clinical Education and Training Units to complement the theoretical education of the nurses.

- Goal 4 of the nursing strategy involves leadership, management empowerment and clinical governance therefore nurses should be empowered in leadership and management. Investing in nursing leadership and nursing profession at large will benefit the smooth running of health establishments and health programmes.

Furthermore, The Department, in collaboration with the Exceptional Nurse Campaign, has developed a campaign to honour nurses throughout the year. The purpose of the campaign was to show the public the amazing difference nurses can make when they are enabled to perform at the top of their game.

- Placement of banners on the fence of health establishments during the month of May. All provinces have been provided with some banners to display at health establishments in the province.
- The provision of bumper magnets for nurses to place on their cars to improve the image of nurses.
- The provision of small gift packs as a token of appreciation to nurses and other health care workers on duty at health establishments.
- Night races in Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, Tshwane, Johannesburg, and Durban between the months of September and October. The proceeds of these race have been used to support the education and training of nurses.

- Together with the Christian Health Alliance, health care workers were assisted with a helpline to deal with psychological and spiritual matters.

It takes great courage to be a nurse. Nurses fought to save lives during the pandemic, putting their health at risk. No one on the health care team has the same personal touch and connection to patients as nurses. The work of nurses deserves special recognition and gratitude.

While perfection is impossible, we should all strive for excellence. You don't have to be flawless to be excellent. I would like to appeal to nurses and midwives countrywide to practice their profession with the excellence and high standards expected from them. This is the time to do what nurses do best. No matter where you are or what area of nursing you work in, you can, and do, make a difference to the public that you serve. Continue serving with pride and advocating for those who can't.

Thank you all for that you do well daily.

Nurses of South Africa I salute you!

Dr M Phaahla: Minister of Health