



Dr. Robert Abela
Prime Minister of Malta
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Auberge de Castille
Valletta VLT 1061
Malta

Mr Paul Pace
President
Malta Union of Midwives and Nurses
Les Lapins Court B N°3
Independence Avenue
Mosta MST 9022
Malta

30 November 2020

Your Excellency, Dear Mr Pace,

On behalf of the International Council of Nurses, I am writing to you both concerning the current dispute between the Malta Union of Midwives and Nurses (MUMN) and the Government of Malta.

The COVID-19 pandemic has placed an enormous strain on the nursing profession which has been stretched to the limit, particularly given the already existing nursing shortages around the world. At this time, it is crucially important for governments to work closely with national nursing associations and unions to invest in the nursing profession and ensure that nurses are receiving fair pay, decent work and adequate protection.

While we recognise the challenging issues that are taking place, we believe strongly in the legitimate and important role of associations, such as MUMN, to represent and advocate for their nurses. Nurses have a major role to play in battling this virus and will continue to have a major role in the health of the populations after the pandemic. In order to strengthen health systems, it is important that governments hear and listen to the voice of nurses now and in the future.

The World Health Organization published the very first *State of the World's Nursing* report this year, which I had the honour to co-Chair. The report recommended an investment in nursing education; the creation of at least six million new nursing jobs; and "strengthening nursing leadership to ensure that nurse have an influential role in health policy formulation and decision-making"¹.

¹ WHO (2020). "State of the World's Nursing: Investing in education, jobs and leadership" p.vii, Available at: <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240003279>

ICN believes that a country's health system and the health of its people depend on having a well-supported, respected and fairly remunerated nursing workforce. It is therefore essential for government to work hand in hand with nursing associations, and extremely regrettable that this is not the current situation in Malta.

At the recent World Health Assembly, Her Royal Highness Princess Muna al-Hussein of Jordan said 'We must invest in health workers. We must invest in educating and employing more health workers to ensure every mother, child, student, parent and grandparent has access to safe health services. We must invest in fair pay and protection of health and care workers. We must invest in a health workforce that would help the world recover.'

ICN applauded this statement and stressed the importance that governments recognise COVID-19 as an occupational disease, ensure personal protective equipment in all healthcare settings, have zero tolerance of discrimination and violence, increase nurses' pay, invest in training and education, prioritise nurses for vaccinations, ensure mental health support, and increase the number and authority of nurse leaders.

ICN expects nurses to have equitable remuneration and decent working conditions, including a safe environment. As employees, nurses have the right to organise, to bargain collectively, and to take industrial action. Strike action is considered the measure of last resort; to be taken only after all other possible means to conclude an agreement have been explored and utilised.²

We sincerely hope that through discussions and negotiations the Government of Malta and the MUMN will be able to find a mutual agreeable resolution to recognise and support all healthcare workers and ensure high quality healthcare for everyone.

Yours sincerely,



Howard Catton
Chief Executive Officer
International Council of Nurses

² ICN (2011). "Industrial Action" position statement. Available at :
https://www.icn.ch/sites/default/files/inline-files/C11_Industrial_action.pdf