Minister Harris calls for innovative transformation of the health workforce

Dublin, Friday November 15: Calling for innovation to expand and transform the health workforce, Minister for Health, Simon Harris TD, today officially opened the Fourth Global Forum on Human Resources for Health (http://hrhforum2017.ie).

The world is facing an estimated shortfall of up to 18 million health workers by 2030, primarily in low and lower-middle income countries, while in the European region the European Commission has estimated a potential shortfall of around 1 million health workers by 2020. This threatens efforts being made to ensure health and wellbeing for all, global security and sustainable development.

Addressing over 1,000 delegates at the opening of the Forum, Minister Harris called for multi-sector involvement in tackling the health workforce challenges. “No one country or organisation can build the health workforce of the future. That is why this Global Forum is so important.”

The Global Strategy on Human Resources for Health and the U.N. report, Working for Health and Growth, by the High-Level Commission on Health Employment and Economic Growth, represent the clearest guides yet for WHO Member States. They are roadmaps for assisting countries in expanding a nation’s health workforce capable of meeting the complex health needs of societies today, and in the future.

In a video address to delegates, WHO Director General called for political and financial commitment to expand and transform the global health workforce. “If we are to accelerate progress to universal health coverage, we must ensure that all people have equitable access to health workers. We must expand and transform the global health workforce.

“This is not a cost. It is an investment. An investment that should be nurtured,” said Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. “The fact is, investing in health workers creates jobs, drives growth and increases productivity by getting sick people out of care and back to work.”

At the Opening, Minister Harris said “The Forum provides an opportunity for all stakeholders to discuss and debate innovative approaches towards advancing the implementation of the Global Strategy and the UN High Level Commission’s recommendations.

"Health workers are the backbone of sustainable health systems and are fundamental to achieving universal health coverage. Tackling 21st century health workforce challenges requires us to think, work and respond nationally, regionally and globally.

"This Forum provides a stepping stone on the road to meeting these challenges and I hope that you will all benefit from the interesting discussions and debates that will take place here this week.”

The theme of the Forum is ‘Building the health workforce of the future’. Delegates at the Forum include senior government officials, representatives from UN organisations, development agencies,
NGOs, civil society representatives, academic and research institutions and health workers. It is convened by the Department of Health, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, World Health Organization, Trinity College Dublin, Health Service Executive and Global Health Workforce Network. The Forum will conclude with the Dublin Declaration on Friday November 17, a multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder declaration for improved governance, strategic investments and financing for an effective, performing and sustainable workforce.

ENDS

Notes to the Editor

Following the Third Global Forum on Human Resources for Health, a number of commitments were made by countries to support the transformation of the landscape for health workers. The adoption in 2016 of the Global Strategy on Human Resources for Health: Workforce 2030 and the work of the UN High level Commission on Health Employment and Economic Growth have both made a bold economic case for investing in the health and social workforce and intensified intersectoral collaboration. In 2017, the 70th World Health Assembly adopted the Working for Health programme and a five-year action plan of the ILO, WHO, OECD towards the implementation of the Commission’s recommendations.

The Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health personnel is also a key instrument in this area. The Code, which was established by the World Health Assembly in 2010, establishes and promotes voluntary practices for the ethical international recruitment of health personnel. It requires countries to implement effective health workforce planning, education, training and retention strategies to sustain a health workforce that is appropriate for the specific conditions of each country.

The launch of Ireland’s National Strategic Framework for Health and Social Care Workforce Planning at the Global Forum is a major step in addressing Ireland’s health workforce challenges. The objective of the framework is to align Ireland’s workforce planning systems both vertically and horizontally in order to identify, agree and implement appropriate solutions to health workforce challenges –within the health sector and with education and other partners. This Framework will support the recruitment and retention of the right mix of health workers across the Irish health system to meet planned and projected service need.

As well as Ireland’s efforts to meet workforce challenges domestically, Ireland’s development cooperation programme is committed to achieving universal health coverage internationally. A quality, well-trained, motivated and adequately financed health workforce is critical to achieve universal health coverage.

To arrange interviews or register for the Fourth Global Forum on Human Resources for Health, please contact:

Sonali Reddy, World Health Organization, +41 79 5090647, reddys@who.int

Elaine Scanlon, Department of Health, +353 872136313, press_office@health.gov.ie

Leonie Corcoran, media support, +353 86852 6535, corcoran.leonie@gmail.com