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**Middle Eastern Nursing and Midwifery Leaders Identify Regional Issues  
During Global Advisory Panel on the Future of Nursing and Midwifery Meeting**

***Meeting convened by the Honor Society of Nursing, Sigma Theta Tau International***

INDIANAPOLIS — The Honor Society of Nursing, Sigma Theta Tau International (STTI) convened a regional meeting of the **Global Advisory Panel on the Future of Nursing and Midwifery (GAPFON)** 23-24 March in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates in collaboration with the Emirates Nursing Association (ENA). More than 30 key nursing and midwifery leaders from 13 countries in the Middle East region participated.

“The Global Advisory Panel on the Future of Nursing and Midwifery is an important conference to identify and develop recommendations to address the most important issues facing health at the global level,” said **Her Royal Highness Princess Muna Al-Hussein of Jordan, Patron of the GAPFON Middle East Regional Meeting**. “Nurses and midwives will play an integral role in leading change to improve the quality of life of people globally by capitalizing on their best assets and collective potentials.”

**Dr. Huda Abu-Saad, Professor of Nursing Science and Director of the Hariri School of Nursing at the American University of Beirut** added, “GAPFON is a visionary and commendable initiative with promising global impact that brings regional leaders together to discuss the future of nursing and midwifery and their impact at the global level.”

**GAPFON priority issues and health challenges in the Middle East**

Regional leaders in nursing and midwifery participated in the meeting. They confirmed that priority issues and action strategies to achieve global health must focus on leadership, policy/regulation, education, and workforce. Participants felt strongly that these priorities are inter-related and each is integral to the achievement of regional

goals. Additionally, they noted that recommendations for action in any of these areas must be evidence-based and linked to achievement of outcomes.

These stakeholders verbalized the importance of developing nursing and midwifery leaders and positioning them in roles where they can be most effective. They noted the importance of leveraging the return on investment that nurses and midwives contribute to the attainment of health. The stakeholders reiterated that promoting quality nursing/midwifery practice and education, including the development and promotion of community initiatives, social justice, and human rights, are areas where nurses and midwives have a pivotal leadership role. They agreed that health promotion focused on disease prevention is vital, along with the importance of adequate preparedness and response to natural and man-made disasters. They also agreed that education, awareness, and timely treatment of mental health issues is a priority in this region.

During their discussions, stakeholders identified specific strategies to enhance health, including utilizing data and evidence to inform health policy and to increase national commitment and funding. They also stressed the importance of employing an accountability framework, including state-of-the-art technology, to monitor and evaluate performance against targets. In addition, the participants recognized the need for coalition-building and interprofessional collaboration at all levels to improve health, along with the development of an adequate, competent nursing/midwifery workforce. These identified strategies are especially important to address the consequences of frequently overlooked or minimized mental health concerns, including those stemming from violence, poverty, and natural disasters. The strategies identified by the Middle East stakeholders are congruent with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

After observing the discussions, **STTI President Dr. Cathy Catrambone** said, "The lively and interactive discussion that took place in Abu Dhabi is evidence that nurse leaders and midwifery leaders in the Middle East are committed to supporting the SDG's that promote health and social empowerment for all populations worldwide. I know their wise counsel will serve GAPFON leadership well as we near the implementation phase post-2016."

The outcomes of the GAPFON Middle East Regional meeting also reflected strong regional support for the World Health Organization's nursing priority areas including education, research, policies and strategies, communication, and interprofessional collaboration. "The Emirates Nursing Association is pleased to join with GAPFON and all nurses and midwives in the Middle East region to promote global health," said **Aysha Al-Mahri, President of the Emirates Nursing Association**. "The collaboration demonstrated by all who attended this meeting was truly exciting to see."

The GAPFON Middle East Regional Meeting represents one of seven global regions where STTI is holding meetings. In the coming months, STTI will convene the remaining two meetings, to be held in Europe and Africa. Data from these meetings will provide the basis for an overall action plan with regional policy implications. GAPFON will analyze and prioritize key recommendations that address each of the region's challenges in both global and regional summary reports and will post these reports at [www.gapfon.org](http://www.gapfon.org).

GAPFON is a catalyst for nurse and midwifery leaders to work together and develop a unified voice and vision for the future of nursing/midwifery and health care globally. GAPFON is globally sponsored by Pfizer, Johns Hopkins School of Nursing, and the National Council of State Boards of Nursing, and regionally in the Middle East by The Cleveland Clinic Abu Dhabi.

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#### **About GAPFON**

The Global Advisory Panel on the Future of Nursing (GAPFON) was convened by The Honor Society of Nursing, Sigma Theta Tau International (STTI) to establish a voice and a vision for the future of nursing that will advance global health. GAPFON seeks to provide evidence on the value of nursing and to participate in and influence health policy, nursing leadership and practice, education, and the global health agenda. GAPFON is sponsored by Pfizer, Johns Hopkins School of Nursing, and the National Council of State Boards of Nursing. For more information about GAPFON, visit [www.gapfon.org](http://www.gapfon.org).

#### **About STTI**

The Honor Society of Nursing, Sigma Theta Tau International (STTI) is a nonprofit organization whose mission is advancing world health and celebrating nursing excellence in scholarship, leadership, and service. Founded in 1922, STTI has more than 135,000 active members in more than 85 countries. Members include practicing nurses, instructors, researchers, policymakers, entrepreneurs and others. STTI's roughly 500 chapters are located at approximately 695 institutions of higher education throughout Armenia, Australia, Botswana, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, England, Ghana, Hong Kong, Japan, Kenya, Lebanon, Malawi, Mexico, the Netherlands, Pakistan, Portugal, Singapore, South Africa, South Korea, Swaziland, Sweden, Taiwan, Tanzania, Thailand, the United States, and Wales. More information about STTI can be found online at [www.nursingsociety.org](http://www.nursingsociety.org).