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## **African Nursing and Midwifery Leaders Identify Regional Health Issues During Global Advisory Panel on the Future of Nursing & 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 the Africa regional meeting of the **Global Advisory Panel on the Future of Nursing & Midwifery (GAPFON)**, 18-19 July in Cape Town, South Africa. More than 20 key nursing and midwifery leaders met to identify Africa’s top regional health issues and determine strategies to allow nursing and midwifery professionals to impact those issues.

### **GAPFON priority issues and health challenges in Africa**

The participants identified maternal child health, communicable diseases, and non-communicable diseases, including mental health, as primary issues of concern for the African region. To address these health concerns, the stakeholders felt strongly that nurses and midwives must engage communities in culturally relevant interventions to improve health outcomes.

Participants were passionate about the fact that priority issues and action strategies must focus on healthcare leadership, policy, education/curriculum, and workforce/practice, noting that these priorities are integral to the achievement of regional goals. The participants further emphasized that promotion of professionalism and capacity building for nursing and midwifery are essential overarching themes to be integrated within all strategies and recommendations.

The stakeholders identified primary strategies congruent with the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). They advocated for reform of educational programs to ensure innovative, interprofessional, and systems approaches to achieve global health care goals, along with reform of regulation and accreditation for nursing, midwifery, and health systems in Africa. They agreed that such steps will strengthen the nursing/midwifery workforce, while simultaneously improving quality of practice and building capacity for the professions in health policy and leadership.

The stakeholders discussed additional key strategies such as the need to use socially accountable approaches to train nurses and midwives to implement evidence-based interventions across all settings. Participants also stressed the importance of health policies and health care management that optimizes the scope of evidence-based practice with a focus on patient outcomes, and identified that cultivation and positioning of nursing/midwifery leaders at all levels is vital to influence health policy and the global health agenda.

The GAPFON Africa Regional meeting outcomes also reflected strong regional support for the priority areas of the World Health Organization, including education, research, policies and strategies, communication, and interprofessional collaboration.

### **GAPFON Africa region participant comments**

“The **South African Nursing Council** wishes to acknowledge GAPFON for the excellent initiative in providing a platform to discuss issues of nursing and midwifery as well as global health concepts,” said **Acting Chairperson Dr. Sharon Vasuthevan**. “We feel extremely privileged to be part of the event and appreciate STTI’s leadership in addressing priorities in nursing and midwifery globally.”

**Dr. Estelle Coustas, Nursing Executive, Mediclinic South Africa**, agreed, “It has been my privilege to present the practice voice alongside my colleagues from nursing and midwifery education at the GAPFON Africa meeting. I can see that as a collaborative voice we can make a difference to quality care and improve health outcomes.”

**Dr. Lonja Mwape, Head of Department, University of Zambia**, added, “The GAPFON Africa meeting reflected the words of Christine Belle: that nurses and midwives care, educate, lead, and celebrate the profession, all while ‘just doing our jobs.’ The leaders at the meeting exemplified the passion and professionalism that will take GAPFON’s mission forward.”

Following the discussions, **STTI President Dr. Cathy Catrambone** said, “The nursing and midwifery leaders in the GAPFON Africa Regional meeting brought forward innovative ideas and perspectives about how nursing and midwifery can positively impact global health outcomes. It was tremendous to see firsthand their passion and commitment to improving the infrastructure for optimal health achievement, and I look forward to the long-term impact our collaborative efforts will have on global health”

The GAPFON Africa Regional Meeting represents the last of seven global regional meetings STTI has conducted during the past year. Data from these meetings will provide the basis for an overall action plan with global and regional policy implications. GAPFON will analyze and prioritize key recommendations addressing each of the region’s challenges in both global and regional summary reports and will post these at [www.gapfon.org](http://www.gapfon.org).

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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) as a catalyst for nurse leaders to work together and develop a unified voice and vision for the future of nursing and health care globally. GAPFON is sponsored by Pfizer, Johns Hopkins School of Nursing, and the National Council of State Boards of Nursing. In addition, Elsevier Education sponsored the European regional meeting. 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 more than 500 chapters are located at approximately 700 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).