

## Santa Marta Group welcomes launch of programme to raise awareness of human trafficking among worldwide community of nurses

Senior adviser to the Santa Marta Group Kevin Hyland today welcomed the launch of a programme to raise awareness of human trafficking among nurses across the world.

The aim of the programme is to raise awareness of human trafficking among the 20 million nurses across the world. Research in the UK and US has found that many trafficked victims engage with healthcare services during their period of exploitation.

The programme includes the launch of booklet at the International Council of Nurses' Congress in Singapore, which was attended by more than 5,000 nurses representing the national nursing bodies of over 120 countries. Mr Hyland is one of the keynote speakers at the ICN Congress. The initiative is a partnership between the International Council of Nurses (ICN), the Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation (INMO), HSE and the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI).

Mr Hyland said:

*“Healthcare professionals, and in particular nurses, provide an opportunity to increase identification of those who are victims of trafficking, but importantly also to provide advice to prevent people taking dangerous risks that could seriously damage their physical and mental health as a public health issue.*

*“To address this scourge, we need to move from words to action. Meetings and conferences are necessary, but more important is what they produce. With current figures revealing globally less than 1% of victims are identified, mobilising the 20 million members of the ICN, most of whom work on the front line, will offer an opportunity to significantly increase the numbers of children, women and men who are protected from this abhorrent abuse.”*

Cindy McCain, chair of the McCain Institute and co-chair of the Arizona Governor's Council on Human Trafficking, was another keynote speaker at the ICN conference. She told the nurses present that their involvement was crucial to combat trafficking.

*“You are on the frontlines. Unless you are educated on signs of human trafficking, we won't win this. This is a call to action!*

*“It is critical we put human trafficking assessment tools in the hands of as many health practitioners as possible,” she said.*

Research in the UK and US has found that many trafficked victims will have some contact with a nurse, who represent the largest profession within the healthcare sector. Nurses do not only work in formal healthcare settings such as in clinics and hospitals, but also in communities, in emergency responses or in health education settings.

ICN, supported by the HR Directorate of the Health Service Executive (HSE) and the Faculty of Nursing & Midwifery, Royal College of Surgeons, Ireland today launched a pamphlet on Human Trafficking, the Basics of what nurses need to know which describes the types of human trafficking, general signs to look out for, and which actions to take if human trafficking is suspected.

A recent Global Report on Trafficking in Persons launched by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) showed that while the number of convictions for human trafficking is increasing, two out of every five countries covered by the UNODC Report had not recorded a single conviction.

Howard Catton, ICN's CEO said:

*“Nurses are on the frontlines of health, caring for the most vulnerable populations, particularly in primary health care settings. They are well positioned to identify signs in suspected human trafficking victims, both physical, such as physical abuse and malnourishment, and mental, such as submissiveness, confusion, fear and lack of self-esteem. Nurses have a duty to protect those in danger and report to the authorities.”*