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BREAKING NEWS

The **World Health Organization Collaborating Centre at the University of Technology Sydney (WHO CC UTS)** is pleased to announce the appointment of **Mrs Elizabeth Iro** from the Cook Islands Ministry of Health as the new **Chief Nurse for the World Health Organization (WHO)**. This exciting development was announced today during the *Sixty-Eighth Session of the WHO Regional Committee for the Western Pacific* by the **WHO Director-General, Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus**.



WHO Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus and Mrs Elizabeth Iro, WHO Chief Nurse.

As **Health Secretary** for the Cook Islands since 2012 and former Cook Islands **Chief Nursing Officer**, Mrs Iro has worked to meet the health needs of the people of the Cook Islands and the Pacific since graduating as a nurse in 1981 and midwife in 1986.

She has been a close colleague and friend of the WHO CC UTS, and long-standing member of the **South Pacific Chief Nursing and Midwifery Officers Alliance (SPCNMOA)** since its inception in 2004 in the Cook Islands. The WHO CC UTS acts as Secretariat for the SPCNMOA which aims to enhance nursing and midwifery effectiveness through promoting and improving population health in the region.

Mrs Iro said *"I am very honoured and humbled with this announcement today..... I think this appointment is going to be raising the profile of nursing and midwifery, and I anticipate will be encouraging and enabling for nurses and midwives to work to their full potential if countries are to achieve university health coverage (UHC)."*

This position of Chief Nurse at WHO has been vacant since 2010. The reinstatement of this position and the appointment of Mrs Iro indicates the value that the new WHO Director-General, Dr Tedros, places on the nursing and midwifery professions within his organization.

Ms Michele Rumsey, WHO CC UTS Director explained the importance of the reinstatement of this globally significant role and the close connections between the WHO CC UTS and Mrs Iro: *"We have worked with Mrs Iro for many years since the formation of the SPCNMOA, and it is a great honour to have a senior nursing and midwifery leader from the Pacific appointed to this important position at WHO. We offer her our sincere congratulations. "*

“It is an extremely positive development for nursing and midwifery globally to have this position reinstated at WHO in Geneva. It demonstrates the importance and respect that Dr Tedros associates with the professions of nursing and midwifery for WHO,” said Head of the WHO CC UTS and Dean of Faculty of Health at UTS, Professor John Daly.



WHO Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus announcing the appointment of WHO Chief Nurse.



Mrs Elizabeth Iro, WHO Chief Nurse.

Mrs Elizabeth Iro's Response to the Announcement

Kia orana

Director-General Dr Tedros, Regional Director Dr Shin Young-Soo and country delegates,

I am very honoured and humbled with this announcement today.

Thank you Sir

As a Cook Islander, a Registered Nurse and Midwife, a Pacific Islander and a WPRO member I acknowledge this privilege and understand the important opportunity this presents for encouraging better collaboration and coordination amongst the diverse organisations such as the ICN International Council of Nurses, WHO collaborating Centers for Nursing and Midwifery, South Pacific Chief Nursing and Midwifery Officers Alliance, Non-Government organisations and WHO Regional Committee members, to improving health outcomes for the people within our region and globally.

First of all I will need to understand some of the internal mechanisms and structures that can best support the work in progressing the WHO agenda especially towards the social goal of “health for all” through primary health care” and UHC.

Because, as we will all agree, nurses are often the first and sometimes the only health professional that people see when they are unwell. They are also part of their local community – sharing its culture, strengths and vulnerabilities – and are capable to deliver effective interventions to meet the needs of patients, families and communities.

I think this appointment is going to be raising the profile of nursing and midwifery and I anticipate it will be encouraging and enabling for nurses to work to their full potential if countries are to achieve universal health coverage.

I bring to this role my lived experience as a woman, a mother, a nurse and midwife, a past president of Nurses Association and Head of a Ministry of Health.

Nursing can and must take the lead on issues to progress to better health outcome for our people but I know we cannot achieve them without the support of politicians, policy-makers and non-nursing health leaders.

I am reminded of the WHO constitution "No one left behind" and as Dr Tedros says all roads lead to UHC. So maybe we can say nurses are on the way to UHC.

Thank you

Contact Us

For more information, contact WHO CC UTS at [our website](#) or reach us at whocc@uts.edu.au.

For information on the Global Network of WHO Collaborating Centres for Nursing and Midwifery [click here](#). For information on the South Pacific Chief Nursing and Midwifery Officers Alliance (SPCMNOA) [click here](#).

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