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**Global Advisory Panel on the Future of Nursing Hosts Regional Meeting
With Key Caribbean Nurse Leaders**

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 (GAPFON)** 17-18 July 2015 in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Key nurse leaders from the Caribbean region¹ were invited to participate in this meeting.

Sponsored by Pfizer, Johns Hopkins School of Nursing, and the National Council of State Boards of Nursing, GAPFON is a catalyst for nurse leaders to work together and develop a unified voice and vision for the future of nursing and health care globally. According to **STTI President Dr. Hester C. Klopper**, “It is evident that the nursing leaders from the Caribbean region are committed to continuing to contribute to global health and to strengthening human resources for health by ensuring active participation in the United Nations (UN) post-2015 agenda. This is essential in meeting the health challenges for the future in this region.”

Dr. Silvia Cassiani, Advisor, Nursing and Allied Health Personnel Development, Unit of Human Resources for Health, Department of Health Systems and Services at the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), stressed that “GAPFON is a new initiative created by STTI that is bringing together voices from the region to discuss issues related to nursing and health that will contribute to the goal of universal access to health and universal health coverage. It will create and strengthen partnerships and synergy to improve the health and quality of life in the American Region.”

GAPFON priority issues and health challenges

The Caribbean nurse leaders confirmed that priority issues and action strategies must focus on:

- **Leadership;**
- **Policy;**
- **Education/curriculum; and**
- **Workforce/practice.**

The Caribbean nurse leaders concurred that increased awareness around cultural diversity and its impact on health care and health systems should remain as an overarching theme for the four priority issues.

In addition to the priority issues, the Caribbean nurse leaders spoke to the importance of strengthening the image of nursing, notably through evidence, and the immense value of multidisciplinary and intersectoral collaboration. They identified specific regional public health and global health challenges including:

- Non-communicable diseases;
- Maternal-Child health, including the need for increased education in midwifery and women's health care;
- Improved treatment of substance abuse and mental health;
- Preparedness for disasters and outbreaks of communicable diseases; and
- Resources to promote and support healthy aging and healthy lifestyles.

As noted by the participants, all of these issues are opportunities for nurses and midwives to join other health professions in achieving the World Health Organization (WHO) goal of universal health coverage, and are in alignment with the U.N. post-2015 development agenda, the Global Strategy on Human Resources for Health, and the proposed WHO Strategic Directions for Nursing and Midwifery (2016-2020).

“The high level of professionalism, analytical thinking, and empiricism that created the atmosphere within which the meeting was conducted has left participants in anticipation of the outcome to this global consultation exercise,” said **Elnora Warner, Chief Nurse for Antigua and Barbuda, and Chair of the Regional Nursing Body of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM)**. “The meeting provided an excellent opportunity for nurse leaders from the CARICOM member territories to participate in identifying priority issues for health and nursing, and strategies to address them.”

“I am particularly pleased to be associated with the global collaborative initiative that GAPFON represents,” said **Dr. Steve Weaver, Head of the University of West Indies School of Nursing, Mona, Jamaica, and Director, PAHO/WHO Collaborating Centre for Nursing and Midwifery in the Caribbean**. “GAPFON has begun to create opportunities to develop a critical mass of nurse leadership in the region who have a vision of improving the quality of life of our Caribbean people.”

The outcomes of this meeting reflected strong regional support for PAHO/WHO's nursing priority areas including education, research, policies and strategies, communication, and interprofessional collaboration.

GAPFON Chair Dr. Martha Hill, dean emerita and professor of Nursing, Medicine, and Public Health at Johns Hopkins University said, “The Caribbean nurse leaders are committed to improving nursing’s

involvement in addressing the regional health needs. They are knowledgeable, collaborative and enthusiastic about working together and with other health leaders in the region.”

During the next year, GAPFON will hold additional regional meetings with key stakeholder groups, including representatives from multiple sectors around the world, to obtain knowledge and social, economic, cultural, and political insight related to the priority issues determined at the regional meetings. 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 at www.gapfon.org.

¹ Antigua-Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Montserrat, Puerto Rico, St. Barthelemy, Sts. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Martin, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, Turks and Caicos.

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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.

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.