



CONTACT:

Julie J. Adams

The Honor Society of Nursing,

Sigma Theta Tau International

julie@stti.org

Direct Line: +1.317.917.4944 (International)

Toll-Free: 888.634.7575 (U.S./Canada)

American and Canadian Nurse Leaders Identify North American Regional Issues During Global Advisory Panel on the Future of Nursing Meetings

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

INDIANAPOLIS — The Honor Society of Nursing, Sigma Theta Tau International (STTI) convened regional meetings of the **Global Advisory Panel on the Future of Nursing (GAPFON)** 22-23 February and 25-26 February in Washington, D.C. More than 40 key nurse leaders from Canada and the United States participated in these meetings.

“It was a privilege to be with a group of North American nurse leaders who share similar concerns and desires to strengthen nursing and global health,” said **International Council of Nurses President Dr. Judith Shamian**. “STTI and all the participating organizations are to be congratulated for the partnership and collaboration exhibited here this week.”

Dr. Antonia Villaruel, Professor and Margaret Bond Simon Dean of Nursing at the University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing, added, “The work of GAPFON provides an opportunity to unleash the power of nursing across the globe to make a significant impact on the health of populations.”

GAPFON priority issues and health challenges in Canada and the United States

The strategic nurse leaders who participated in the meetings confirmed that priority issues and action strategies must focus on leadership, policy, education/curriculum, and workforce/practice. Participants spoke strongly about the fact that these priorities are inter-related and each is integral to the achievement of regional goals. They identified meaningful inclusion and evidence-based outcomes as essential components to be integrated within all strategies and recommendations.

The stakeholders verbalized the importance of universal health care and the value of leveraging the return on investment that nursing contributes to the attainment of health. They reiterated that ensuring access to health care – including community based care – is an area where nurses can play a pivotal leadership role. Given the role that healthy behaviors play in optimal health, they agreed that health promotion focused on disease prevention is vital.

During their discussions, stakeholders identified specific strategies to enhance health promotion, including promoting and engaging in advocacy in environmental and social justice issues that impact public health. These strategies are congruent with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In addition, stakeholders were unanimous about the need for coalition-building and interprofessional collaboration at all levels to improve health promotion. They noted that this collaboration is especially important to address the consequences of frequently overlooked or minimized mental health concerns, including those stemming from violence, poverty, and natural disasters.

After observing the discussions, **STTI President Dr. Cathy Catrambone** said, “It is evident that the GAPFON stakeholders are committed to supporting the Sustainable Development Goals that promote health and social empowerment for all populations worldwide. I am excited to see the long-term impact their efforts will have on global health”

The outcomes of the GAPFON North American Regional meeting also reflected strong regional support for the Pan American Health Organization and World Health Organizations' nursing priority areas including education, research, policies and strategies, communication, and interprofessional collaboration. **Community Health Nurses of Canada President Morag Granger**, said, “This was an excellent opportunity to gather with key nursing leaders from North America to ensure the voices of nurses are heard with regard to improving health, both regionally and globally. It is through venues such as this that we can move health systems forward to improve health for all.”

The GAPFON North American Regional Meetings represent one of seven global regions where STTI is holding meetings. In the coming months, STTI will also convene meetings in the Middle East, 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 at www.gapfon.org.

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. GAPFON is sponsored by Pfizer, Johns Hopkins School of Nursing, and the National Council of State Boards of Nursing. In addition, the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) sponsored the North American regional meeting.

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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.