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BRISBANE, Australia, 12 October 2017 - Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus today appointed Ms Elizabeth Iro as the Chief Nursing Officer at the World Health Organization (WHO).

Ms Iro is a registered nurse, and the Cook Islands' current Secretary of Health. With this announcement, Dr Tedros fulfils a commitment he made during his transition to the Director-General role to appoint a nurse to his senior team.

"I am thrilled to welcome Ms Iro to our team as WHO's Chief Nursing Officer," said Dr Tedros. "Nurses play a critical role not only in delivering healthcare to millions around the world, but also in transforming health policies, promoting health in communities, and supporting patients and families. Nurses are central to achieving universal health coverage and the Sustainable Development Goals. Ms Iro will keep that perspective front and centre at WHO."

Ms Iro has more than 30 years of experience in public health in the Cook Islands and regionally. As Secretary of Health, she has implemented health reforms to strengthen the country's health system. These include developing the country's National Health Roadmap 2017-2036, the National Health Strategic Plan 2017-2021, and the Health Clinical Workforce Plan.

She had previously served as the country's Chief Nursing Officer and Acting Director of Hospital Health Services. For the first 25 years of her career, she was a staff nurse, midwife and charge midwife at hospitals in the Cook Islands and New Zealand.

This appointment is the latest addition to the senior leadership team Dr Tedros announced last week, which includes representatives from every WHO region and is 60% women. It came at the 68th session of the WHO Regional Committee for the Western Pacific, taking place from 9 to 13 October 2017 in Brisbane, Australia.

http://www.wpro.who.int/mediacentre/releases/2017/20171012b/en/