Plenary Speech - ILC 2026

Jemima Nyakongo

Distinguished Chair, delegates, sisters and brothers,

My name is Jemima Nyakongo, and I speak today on behalf of HomeNet International, the global network of home-based worker organizations representing over 1.5 million workers. I also speak as a home-based worker.

Like millions of women, I know what it means to work long hours from home while balancing unpaid care work responsibilities, facing irregular income, and remaining invisible in labour systems that benefit from our work but fail to protect us.

This year's discussions on decent work in the platform economy, social dialogue and tripartism, and gender equality are interconnected for home-based workers. They highlight an urgent reality: the future of work cannot be fair, inclusive, or sustainable if it excludes workers in the informal economy.

Across the world, *platformization* is reshaping home-based work. Many workers now depend on digital platforms, e-commerce systems, and app-based intermediaries to access markets and earn income, yet this innovation comes without protections or accountability.

Workers experience low and unpredictable pay, hidden employment relationships, digital surveillance, and algorithmic control.

Many absorb costs of production, cancelled work orders, internet access, electricity, equipment, and data, while platforms continue to profit from their labour.

For women home-based workers, these inequalities are even deeper. Digital exclusion, unpaid care work, unequal access to technology, lack of social protection, and gender discrimination create overlapping disadvantages.

The proposed Convention on decent work in the platform economy is critical. It must apply universally to all platform workers, regardless of employment status. This includes home-based workers and own-account workers, a subcategory of home-based workers who are economically dependent on platforms or other entities that determine their income, access to work, and working conditions.

The Convention should not rely solely on national legislation and existing employment classifications, which have historically excluded large segments of informal economy workers from labour protections. International labour standards must help close these protection gaps.

Worker protections must be comprehensive, inclusive, and rights-based. Occupational safety and health protections must extend to all platform workers and include gender-responsive measures and recognition of psychosocial and mental health risks.

The Convention must also guarantee transparency and accountability in platform governance. Workers must have access to clear information on how algorithms function, how decisions on pay and work allocation are made, and how their data is collected, stored, used, and governed.

Workers must be consulted on decisions affecting their work and must have the right to organize and bargain collectively.

As workers across the world remind us: “Nothing for Us, Without Us.”

Meaningful protection requires inclusive social dialogue. Home-based workers remain largely invisible within labour governance systems despite being essential contributors to economies and supply chains. Governments, employers, and workers' organizations must create spaces for informal economy workers to participate in policymaking and governance.

We know progress is possible because we have seen it happen. A major milestone was ILO Convention No. 177 on Home Work, which recognized homeworkers as workers and affirmed their right to equal treatment and protection. In Sindh, the Home-Based Workers Act expanded legal recognition and access to social security. In India, the Self-Employed Women's Association strengthened collective bargaining through cooperatives. In Thailand, HomeNet Thailand helped secure legal protections through the Home Workers Protection Act.

Finally, no discussion on decent work or digital transformation can be complete without gender equality. Most home-based workers are women, yet they remain excluded from labour protections, social security, and decision-making. A transformative agenda must centre women in the informal economy, not treat them as an afterthought.

Dear delegates, home-based workers are workers. No future of work can be fair if it leaves home-based workers behind.

Thank you.