



GENEVA CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS  
ADVANCEMENT AND GLOBAL DIALOGUE

## UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

### Panel Discussion on the Rights to Work and Social Security in the Informal Economy

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#### BACKGROUND AND THEME

In its resolution 55/9, the Human Rights Council decided to organize during its fifty-eighth session a panel discussion on **the realization of the rights to work and to social security in the informal economy, in the context of sustainable and inclusive economies**, with an emphasis on the importance of international cooperation and partnerships in this regard, to identify major challenges, experiences and best practices.

#### OPENING STATEMENT

**Ms. Nada AL-NASHIF, United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights**

From domestic care to the textile industry, street vendors, construction work, and the agriculture sector, the informal economy is the invisible backbone of our societies. Over half the world's population, more than 4 billion people, and over 90 percent of micro and small enterprises, are in the informal economy. Nearly 60 percent of women's employment globally is also in the informal economy, with this figure exceeding 90 percent in low-income countries.

Most people enter the informal economy not by choice, but due to a lack of opportunities for formal work. They experience dangerous or precarious working conditions, low and irregular wages, have limited or no access to vocational opportunities and to social security benefits in the events of unemployment, work-related injuries, sickness, or childbirth. As a result, they are more



likely to experience discrimination, exploitation, including forced labour and servitude, and just general abuse. Such practises often go undetected.

### **Times of tectonic shifts in the world of work**

We find ourselves at a moment of considerable change in the world of work. We see how rapidly evolving technologies are transforming jobs. These technologies have certainly brought improvements to workplace safety and have provided greater flexibility for workers, but they also carry risks and need to be managed responsibly. At the same time, climate-related extreme weather episodes are disrupting entire sectors of the informal economy, from agriculture to tourism to fishing.

The value of work more generally in the informal sector is often excluded from economic indicators, including gross domestic product. Informal workers are not counted, and as a result, they do not count. Their productivity and contributions are not captured. Their grievances are rarely addressed and may fester, potentially prolonging situations of inequality and discrimination. All these factors deepen societal tensions, fray at social cohesion, and contribute to today's division and polarisation. These changes in the employment landscape are similar to those that took place during the Industrial Revolution in the 19th century, which ignited the labour rights movement and united calls for greater equality and dignity at work.

### **Human rights as a compass in the informal economy**

It is, therefore, once again critical to uphold these principles, and human rights can show us the way ahead. International and regional human rights norms offer guidance on designing and delivering inclusive and sustainable work and social protection systems. Based on the principles of non-discrimination and equality, States can expand universal social security systems to include all workers, and there has been some notable progress in this regard.

Some countries have extended social or other legal protections to informal workers in sectors such as domestic work and agriculture or the gig economy. In 2024, last year, for the first time, 52.4% of the world's population was actually covered by some form of social protection benefit. But that protection remains uneven, especially between high-income and low-income countries.

Under human rights law, States must show that every effort was made to use the maximum available resources to provide levels of social security benefits that are sufficient for people to acquire at least essential healthcare, as well as basic housing, basic education, and goods and services.

On the right to work, States have taken steps to reduce discrimination and exploitation. Some countries have, for example, improved coordination between tax authorities and social services and have encouraged employers to declare their level of compliance with labour regulations. Others have increased legal support for victims and have adopted laws that grant residence permits to foreign victims of labour exploitation.

However, more is needed, including the facilitation of the transition of workers to the formal economy and the improvement of data collection. Employers' organisations, trade unions, and other workers' representatives must be able to participate and should be consulted in



formulating, implementing, and evaluating policies. Together with the International Labour Organisation (ILO), OHCHR is working to support States in all of these areas.

### **Transitioning towards a human rights-based economy**

Ms. Al-Nashif is pleased to put forward the human rights economy concept, which has been developed by OHCHR as a very helpful framework. It involves ensuring that all policies, including taxation and public spending, focus on advancing human rights so that resources are made available for states to invest in decent job opportunities and working conditions and social security.

International cooperation in this area is crucial, given the large disparities in protection offered to workers between countries with very different income levels. Efforts to reform the global financial architecture and strengthen international financing mechanisms will have a positive impact on workers' rights. For example, human rights-based debt restructuring can help to safeguard fiscal space needed to realise the rights to work and to social protection.

Moreover, using economic indicators in addition to GDP should capture the positive contributions to society of unpaid care and support work. Globally agreed rules on taxation could also significantly increase revenues for countries in the Global South, enabling them to invest in more opportunities for decent work and in social safety nets. Discussions on a global fund for social protection are another promising step and must be supported.

Today's discussion is an important opportunity to take stock of progress, to identify action points that could guarantee the rights to work and social protection for all, definitely including workers in the informal economy. We know what it takes to make this work. We have the tools and the frameworks, urging thereby all to join efforts to fulfil these rights for all.

### **STATEMENTS BY PANELLISTS**

#### **Mr. Tomoya OBOKATA, Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences**

Back in 2022, I explored through my thematic report to the UNGA how certain characteristics and conditions prevalent in the informal economy may lead to exploitation of workers. These include a lack of legislative or regulatory frameworks, reluctance on the part of employers and workers to register formally, weak labour inspection, limited access to justice and remedies, and difficulties in exercising trade union rights. Although not all forms of informal work are exploitative or abusive, certain sectors such as agriculture, domestic work, manufacturing, mining, construction, sex work, and part of platform work show a clear link to contemporary forms of slavery.

#### **Informal workers' vulnerabilities compounded by intersecting factors**

In terms of the profiles of informal workers, gender disparities vary across regions, with informal employment being a greater source of work for men globally than for women. Nevertheless, this global trend does not reflect the reality in many low- and lower-middle-income countries. In regions including Africa, Asia, and Latin America, women are disproportionately engaged in informal work, often in sectors like garment manufacturing, waste collection, and domestic work. Informal employment is also prevalent among children and young people.



Globally, three out of four young women and men engage in informal work compared to adults. These workers frequently lack access to benefits such as sick leave, pensions, and medical insurance, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. The SR's report to the Human Rights Council this year will focus on the worst forms of child labour. So far, the SR have discovered that many children across the globe are working in the informal sector, often under hazardous conditions, having negative impacts on their physical and mental development.

The vulnerabilities for informal workers are further compounded by intersecting factors. For example, older workers, especially those who have spent their entire lives in the informal economy, often lack access to pensions or social security. Persons with disabilities face exclusion from formal employment and are disproportionately pushed into informal work. In addition, ethnic, religious, or linguistic minorities, Indigenous Peoples, as well as migrant workers, have a higher likelihood of working in an informal sector due to the pre-existing discrimination, social inequality, and exclusion.

### **Best practices to protect the rights of informal workers**

In response to these challenges, many positive initiatives are currently being advanced in various parts of the world. To begin with, some States have adopted legislative or regulatory frameworks to protect the rights of informal workers. For example, **Rwanda** ensures equal pay, social security, and workplace safety for all informal workers. Countries like **France, Morocco, the Philippines, and South Africa** have incorporated domestic work into their national legal frameworks, securing rights such as employment contracts, minimum wages, and social protections.

Additionally, various governments have promoted the registration of informal businesses. In this regard, **Chile and Türkiye** offer some tax exemptions for small businesses. Modern technology also plays a part in facilitating registration of informal workers. A good example is [e-Shram](#) established in **India**, which is a national database of unorganised workers in the informal economy.

In a context of labour inspection, **Uruguay** has established dedicated units within the Labour Inspectorate to identify exploitation in domestic work, and Brazil proactively deploys mobile inspection units, allowing them to reach remote and rural areas where informality tends to be high. It is also worth highlighting that modern technologies such as GPS, smartphone applications, and advanced data processing are increasingly being utilised to improve labour inspection in the informal economy.

In addition, **trade unions and workers' organisations** are also playing an essential role in safeguarding the rights of informal workers. Many represent them directly and negotiate their working conditions or help them organise effectively by building their capacity and solidarity across sectors. Workers organisations also advocate for legal and policy reforms to enhance social protection, facilitate regularisation, and improve access to social security and other benefits. There is no one-size fits all approach as a transition from the informal to the formal economy is inevitably influenced by economic, social, political, and cultural factors in each state.



Therefore, tailored solutions that respond to the vulnerabilities of informal workers must be carefully considered and implemented. It is also essential that the needs of women, young people, older workers, migrant workers, minorities, Indigenous Peoples, and workers with disabilities are adequately addressed. The path forward is clear.

Targeted interventions and collaborative efforts must be implemented with the involvement of all stakeholders, including workers organisations, civil society, financial institutions, as well as informal workers themselves, in order to promote a more joined-up approach and to ensure that the rights to dignified work and social security for informal workers are secured globally. This will in turn facilitate a more effective and meaningful transition from the informal to the formal economy and prevent contemporary forms of slavery. Let us commit to this vision and take the necessary steps to turn legal principles into tangible outcomes.

**Ms. Mia SEPPÖ, Assistant Director-General for the Jobs and Social Protection Cluster at the International Labour Organisation (ILO)**

We are here today to confront the profound challenge to global social justice, the pervasive denial of fundamental rights to decent work and social security within the informal economy. This is not a marginal issue, it is a reality for billions of people. We must move beyond simply acknowledging this challenge and commit to transformative action.

**Stark facts depicting the scale of informal work**

Nearly 58% of global employment is within the informal sector. In low-income countries, this is almost 90% of the workforce, a stark indicator of systemic inequality. 80% of enterprises operate informally, many of which lack decent working conditions, and informal workers earn half of what formal workers do.

Occupational hazards in the informal economy lead to nearly 2 million deaths annually, and less than 10% of workers in low-income countries receive benefits in case of work injury, and a mere 2.6% of low-income countries receive maternal benefits. There's been reference to the fact that women are disproportionately in informal work. Over 80% of domestic workers, a large portion of whom are women, work informally, with only 20% having social insurance.

Youth are at higher risk of informality. More than three quarters of youth are in informal employment, compared to 55% of those aged 25 to 64. Own account workers are more than twice as likely to be in informal employment compared to employees, highlighting the vulnerability of these workers.

The widespread prevalence of informality is undeniable, but these statistics represent more than numbers. They are the stark reality of street vendors, of delivery workers, whose livelihoods are threatened without social protection. This unacceptable situation demands that we protect workers' rights, improve working conditions, guarantee social protection, and promote overall well-being.

**An actionable roadmap to facilitate the transition to the formal economy**

We must implement urgent effective strategies to facilitate the transition of enterprises and workers to the formal economy, securing decent work and social protection for all. The ILO,



guided by its constitutional mandate to promote social justice and decent work for all, is uniquely positioned to lead this transformation. ILO's advantage lies in its foundation of internationally recognised labour standards, our tripartite structure that brings together governments, employers, and workers, and its deep understanding of the complexities of formalisation. In particular, ILO Recommendation 204 provides a clear, actionable roadmap to facilitate transition from the informal to the formal economy. In fact, this is one of the topics discussed at the International Labour Conference (ILC) in June this year. This is how we can achieve progress.

One, prioritising **fundamental rights and protection**. Freedom of association, collective bargaining, the elimination of forced and child labour, the eradication of discrimination, as well as safety and health at work, are non-negotiable and must be universally applied, regardless of employment status.

Two, we need to address **unsafe and unhealthy working conditions**. We must extend and enforce protections to ensure every worker has a safe and healthy working environment. This is a moral obligation.

Three, **universal social protection** as a right. Social security encompassing access to health care and income security throughout the life cycle is a fundamental human right, not a privilege, that drives formalisation. As such, we need to build and maintain universal social protection floors as per ILO Recommendation 202, tailored to informal workers and their families. We need to expand social security and insurance to adapting legal frameworks, administrative procedures, benefits, and contributions to informal workers. This is a critical factor in enabling their transition to the formal economy. We need to reach universal and adequate protection to achieve social justice and economic stability and resilience.

### **How to successfully extend social protection to informal workers**

As the Deputy High Commissioner also referred to, the recently launched joint OHCHR and ILO fact sheet on the right to social security guide countries to make this right a reality. There are numerous examples of countries that have successfully extended social protection to informal workers.

**Uruguay** uses 'monotax' mechanisms that simplifies tax and contributions payments for micro and small enterprises. This mechanism has led to a marked increase in social security coverage of the self-employed and micro enterprises. **South Africa** extended legal coverage of unemployment, maternity and sickness insurance to domestic workers. **Argentina's** 'Law of the Actor' extended social security to the culture and creative sector by recognising a minimum of four months work as a full year of service, effectively adapting traditional contributions accounting to the intermittent nature of work in this sector.

### **Addressing gender inequality head-on**

Progress requires addressing gender inequality head-on within the informal economy. Gender equality is indeed essential for a just and equitable society. Quality child care and other care services are essential for promoting decent and productive employment, especially for women who are the ones who pay the heaviest penalties in terms of access to decent work when quality





care services remain out of reach. We face a critical juncture. The question is not if we should act, but how we should act.

### **Empowering the voices of informal workers**

The transition to formality is a journey demanding innovative multifaceted strategies that address today's world of work, including integrated policy frameworks. We need comprehensive integrated evidence-based strategies developed through social dialogue that break down silos and combine incentives with compliance measures. We need empowering voice and representation. Strengthening the organisation and representation of informal workers and economic units is crucial for their rights and voices to be heard. This is about genuine empowerment, not token representation. This also requires building institutions that can sustain and amplify workers' voices over time, ensuring their participation is shaping policies that impact them.

### **Tackling decent work deficits and digital labour platforms**

We also need addressing decent work deficits now. While formalisation is the long-term goal, we must immediately improve working conditions in the informal economy as a foundation for formalisation with social security as a key enabler. This includes also considering the opportunities and challenges brought by transformations in labour markets related with technological transformation, including, for instance, the impact on the world of work from the digital labour platforms. In this regard, ILC 2025 will begin a double discussion towards the possible adoption of a new international labour standard for decent work in the platform economy. If adapted, this will pioneer the setting of international labour standards towards the future of work. We must foster an enabling environment for sustainable enterprises, promoting productivity gains and economic development.

### **Formalization alongside green and digital transitions as mutually reinforcing**

Formalising economic units facilitates formal employment and access to contributory social protection. Formalisation and a green transition are mutually reinforcing. We must address vulnerabilities and support informal workers to avoid leaving them behind. Digital tools can support formalisation, but equitable and affordable access is crucial to avoid deepening the digital divide. Robust data is essential to grasp the nature and drivers of informality. We need to invest in data systems to ensure that policies are evidence-based.

To conclude, these strategies are grounded in the human rights and are practical and actionable steps towards a more just and equitable world of work. The ILO, through its internationally recognised standards, technical assistance, as well as through the Global Coalition for Social Justice and the UN Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions, stands ready to work together with diverse partners to drive progress on decent work and equality. This is a moral and economic imperative, but protecting informal workers not only uplifts human dignity, but also strengthens economies and reinforces our shared humanity. Let us commit, with a sense of urgency, to make decent work a reality for all.



**Ms. Allison CORKERY, Director of the Law Programme at Women in Informal Employment, Globalising and Organising (WIEGO)**

It is worth reiterating that informality is the norm, not the exception in the world of work. The informal economy is a global economy, is also diverse, so creating laws and policies that are suitable, accessible, and inclusive for these workers is complex. It is this complexity that makes a human rights-based approach to informality so crucial. Taking action to address informality is not only a moral and economic necessity, but also a requirement under international human rights law and a practical way to advance towards a human rights economy. In particular, it is worth highlighting **three principles that can inform how policymakers** understand and respond to the particular challenges of realising the rights to work and to social security in the informal economy.

**The intersectionality principle**

The first principle is intersectionality. Informal work is not just the result of economic factors, it is intertwined with systemic discrimination and structural inequalities. As the SR highlighted, workers' identities shape how and where they work, leaving them vulnerable to exploitative working arrangements, poor working conditions, and a high risk of poverty. Women are overrepresented in the informal economy, typically confined to the lowest paying and most insecure jobs. Almost half of workers in the of informal workers are self-employed or own-account workers. These workers are excluded from legal protections because labour law is distinguished between those who are in a standard employment relationship and those who are not. For these workers, illness, care responsibilities, or disruptions in access to resources can result in a direct loss of income. Of course, these factors too have a **gendered dimension**.

Despite facing **higher risks of poverty**, workers in the informal economy are typically excluded from contributory social insurance because they're linked to employment, these programmes, and targeted non-contributory social assistance programmes often miss the working poor, particularly in urban areas. These workers who are in streets, markets, landfills, and homes are increasingly vulnerable to extreme weather conditions like heat waves, floods, and fires, which impact their health and their productivity. As climate transition measures reshape industries that they work in, their roles in global value chains will be directly affected, either positively or negatively. A key action for States, therefore, is to improve statistics on informality so that policymakers have a more nuanced understanding of the scope of the informal economy and the diversity of working conditions within it.

**The indivisibility principle**

The second principle is indivisibility. Work-related rights are interrelated and interdependent. It is important to highlight the importance of the rights to **freedom of association and to collective bargaining** in realising the rights to work and to social security. These are collective rights which address unequal power relations inherent in working arrangements and working relationships. They enable workers to participate in workplace decision making and bargain for better working conditions and expanded social security. Workers in the informal economy can and do organise, but they face institutional barriers to registering as unions, such as onerous representativity thresholds or unfeasible administrative requirements.





They do register as associations and cooperatives, but in these cases they are typically excluded from social dialogue institutions, including tripartite structures, which limits their ability to meaningfully participate in policy and lawmaking processes. A key action for States, therefore, is to update labour laws or create new ones that are designed for workplaces like public spaces and private homes and remove legal barriers to registering worker organisations as unions.

### The interconnectedness principle

The third principle is interconnectedness. States' obligations in realising the **right to work and to social security** in the informal economy are multi-dimensional. They must take action to respect, protect, and fulfil these rights, and by unpacking how these obligations apply specifically to informality, we can chart a clear human rights-based path towards workers' transition to the informal economy. The obligation to respect means that states must avoid actions that interfere with or limit the rights to work and to social security. This includes actions by local authorities. In many cities, workers in public spaces face a myriad of laws, regulations, and ordinances that restrict their activities. Some of these criminalise their work, others are enforced in an arbitrary, discriminatory, or corrupt manner.

**Social dialogue** is critical to changing this. It allows workers to help shape laws that better reflect their realities and ensure that enforcement is fair and respects their right to due process. Some restrictions on informal work may be necessary for public interest, such as closing dump sites, rezoning public space, or limiting access to particular resources for environmental concerns. In these cases, they should be replaced with alternatives that provide at least the same value to workers, and this can be done through livelihood protection plans that are co-designed with workers.

The **obligation to protect** means that States must design regulatory frameworks to hold employers and others accountable for their actions when they violate workers' rights. Workers who are isolated in private homes, such as domestic workers and home workers, are especially vulnerable. They are often overlooked by labour inspectors and in factory audits, so strengthening measures to ensure that employers follow labour laws, including mandatory contracts and registration in social insurance schemes, is crucial. Furthermore, States' **extraterritorial obligations** include preventing corporations from harming workers' rights abroad. This is hugely important for workers who are part of complex global value chains, and the exclusion of home workers from the due diligence requirements currently being debated in Europe is a worrying retrogression in this regard.

The **obligation to fulfil** rights to work and social security in the context of informality is a gradual multi-step process, as we heard. There is no one-size-fits-all solution. Governments must adapt their strategies to fit the unique needs of their economies and labour markets. Key to this is co-designing measures that address the specific needs of poor workers in the informal economy and promote long-term systemic change, and investing the maximum available resources in them. Such measures include improving urban infrastructure, expanding social security schemes, and supporting the integration of worker cooperatives into sustainable value chains.



Turning to **social security**, a growing number of countries are adapting contributory social insurance to include informal economy workers, although progress is slow. Rights-aligned actions for States to close the financing gap for social security include:

- mobilising domestic resources through a progressive tax system that recognises what workers in the informal economy already pay, often at the municipal level;
- ensuring that those who benefit from workers' labour contribute to social security, for example, by earmarking revenue from extended producer responsibility schemes or ensuring digital platforms contribute to contractors' social insurance;
- subsidising social insurance contributions for low-income informal economy workers to expand the contributor base for social security schemes; and
- mobilising international financing through international cooperation and assistance, such as the Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions.

Again, action is urgently needed. Geopolitical upheaval, economic volatility, and climate breakdown will only worsen the challenges facing informal economy workers, but we shouldn't accept that there's no alternative. We can build a human rights economy, one that protects workers, promotes equality, and strengthens resilience for the future. Informal workers must be at the forefront of our efforts.

### CONCLUDING REMARKS

**Mr. Tomoya OBOKATA** stresses the importance of sharing good practises that may exist in various parts of the world. In his report submitted to the UNGA in 2022, he tried to highlight as many positive examples as possible, thereby encouraging everyone to get a grasp of it. In summary, it is important to formalise informal work and there is no single ways to do so. We need to take into consideration different political, economic, social and cultural factors in each state. Thus, a **tailored approach** should be encouraged depending on the needs of the informal workers.

As a starting point, it is important to **extend national labour and social security laws** and regulations to the informal economy so that they can be protected one way or another. Registering the businesses by providing incentives that has been implemented in various parts of the world is quite a good tax exemptions and credit to small businesses or universal or non-contributory social protection, including pension and health coverage. As mentioned by the panellists, simplified tax systems are designed to encourage workers and employers to be registered. Many of these good examples actually do come from the so-called Global South, which is able to do all of these things, thereby encouraging all other States to consider them.

Related to this, the importance of extending labour laws is interlinked with **labour inspection**. Often, the SR has discovered that the labour inspection does not happen in the informal economy because the law does not extend so that labour inspectors cannot actually enter into a domestic household to detect domestic solitude. There are innovative ways to improve the labour inspection. To conclude, it is important to empower the most vulnerable women, children, young persons, older workers, minorities, indigenous peoples, and workers with disabilities to resist exploitation and abuse. The SR recommends **temporary special measures** such as access to social security benefits, access to much needed education, which may allow them to have a decent work in a formal economy. Empowering the most vulnerable is particularly important.



Thanking Member States and civil society for very far-reaching and rich contributions, **Ms. Mia SEPPO** acknowledges that remarkable progress has been made in extending social protection. However, the challenges have also been recognised and the need not to be complacent. The challenges include ensuring decent work, social security, healthcare, housing, and basic services for all, especially for informal workers, women, and youth in low-income countries. This is an urgent need and it is exacerbated by the economic challenges with the green and digital transition. The ILO and its GHR are committed to supporting states in building universal social protection systems that guarantee comprehensive and sustainable protection for everyone, regardless of employment status. International human rights instruments and ILO social security standards provide a robust framework for a **rights-based approach to social protection** instead of one where access to these fundamental rights are dependent on charity and discretion.

The **transition to formality** requires innovative strategies adapted to national context policy frameworks that are comprehensive and empowering voice and representation and harnessing technology. Indeed, there's been reference to the lack of organisation of some categories of workers and that this makes them more marginalised and reduces their chances of being adequately represented in open debates. Although many informal workers are in fact organised in one form or another, it is fundamental to strengthen the role of workers' organisations as trade unions can contribute to facilitate registration with social protection schemes and support workers to claim and effectively access their rights. We have examples of this in several countries, including Denmark or Germany or Kyrgyzstan.

On the issue of **platform work**, in June the ILC will begin a double discussion towards the possible adoption of a new international labour standard on decent work in the platform economy. The ILO Tripartite Constituents will try to build consensus around a balance that ensures the protection of digital platform workers while still benefiting from the employment and income opportunities the platform economy offers and the vibrancy of the informal sector in many countries as well.

On the **importance of labour inspectors**, she emphasises the need for clear and comprehensive mandates and adequate resourcing of these. The mandate of labour and social security inspection should be sufficient to include all economic sectors and inspection mechanisms responsive to the challenges of certain occupations, and this include agriculture and food, this include domestic and work at home, and this include fisheries, so occupations that have particular challenges. To conclude, she extends its thanks for the richness of the contributions from Member States and civil society, while assuring that ILO stands ready to work with its Constituencies and partners to help achieve universal social protection for all.

Appreciating the participants in the interactive dialogue and the many examples of both national and global action taken, for **Ms. Allison CORKERY** it is clear that despite the country and regional level specificities, this is a universal challenge of addressing informality. In particular, she echoes the importance of supporting entities in the social and solidarity economy as a key pathway for workers to transition to the formal economy. WIEGO welcomes the focus this year on the international year of cooperatives. A number of different interventions have been mentioned including inclusive urban planning, labour law reform, strengthened corporate due diligence requirements within global supply chains, and expanded social security financing. **Social dialogue and collective bargaining** are absolutely critical for the transition to the formal economy, but they are not one and the same. WIEGO's work allows to see a risk that rather than



focussing on efforts to extend collective bargaining, the focus sometimes can shift towards the promotion of other broader forms of social dialogue.

The **formalisation process** does raise a number of important policy questions that span the local, regional, and national level that multiple stakeholders do need to be part of. We can think of this as **formalisation ‘with a capital F’**, a more top-down approach aiming to shape the regulatory environment in which works takes place at a more macro level. Nevertheless, in multi-stakeholder spaces, if democratic processes are more limited and the resources to participate are highly uneven, there's a risk that worker voices get diluted and corporate interests dominate.

**Collective bargaining**, on the other hand, enables workers to negotiate enforceable agreements that can positively shift relationships with actors that shape their terms and conditions of work. We can think of this as **formalisation with ‘a lowercase f’**, a more bottom-up approach aimed to regulate relationships between parties to an agreement, and working conditions at the more micro level. Both are really critical, and a common feature is that they enable workers to participate collectively rather than individually in decision-making processes, which makes institutional change and progressive formalisation possible. To conclude, she encourages Member States to continue their efforts on both those fronts.

## INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE

### Views Expressed by State Delegations

The **Deputy Minister of Economy, Culture, and Innovation of Albania** illustrates his Government’s firm commitment to promoting inclusive economic growth and decent employment for all. The Local Decent Work Programme 2023-2026 aims to improve the labour inspection efficiency, promote social dialogue, and enhance policies on decent employment. Albania acknowledges the importance of tackling the informal economy by implementing advanced digital tools, such as the Risk Intelligence and Analysis Matrix, an innovative platform that has modernised labour inspection in Albania through risk-based planning and the detection of undeclared work. As Albania continues to build a more inclusive social security system, it emphasises the importance of the contributory principle, where the amount of pensions is directly linked to the contributions. It continues to make ongoing efforts to reduce informality through awareness campaigns about the importance of paying social security contributions based on real wages. In addition, Albania is making significant progress in the field of international cooperation by increasing the number of bilateral social security agreements to ensure the fair and equal treatment of our citizens working abroad, as well as migrant workers working in Albania.

On behalf of the **Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC), Kuwait** reiterates the extreme importance of securing rights to work and social security to all workers according to the national and economic context of every country. GCC countries granted great importance to integrating informal economy within the informal economy as part of their comprehensive economic development strategy and thus the informal economy’s share of the regional GDP does not exceed 18%. Promoting formal economy contributes to achieving economic stability, financial stability and economic growth and social inclusion by providing services to all categories of society. They took many measures in order to mainstream the informal economy such as simplifying registration process to SMEs, promoting taxation systems, promoting digital



solutions that contribute to improving transparency and access to financial services. They elaborated strong regulatory frameworks to protect workers from discrimination, exploitation and abuses and to secure their dignified and equitable treatment regardless of the job situation. Reiterating their commitment to support international efforts to achieve SDGs and to reduce inequalities, the GCC countries look forward to continuing cooperation with international partners to exchange best practises in this very important field of work.

On behalf of **ASEAN, Malaysia jointly with Timor-Leste** reaffirm that every individual has the right to work, freely choose employment and enjoy just decent and favourable working conditions as enshrined in the ASEAN human rights declaration. Equally, access to social security is essential for ensuring dignity and a decent standard of living. They welcome the focus of this panel discussion on the informal economy which remains a crucial driver of economic development, particularly in developing countries. However, the high rate of informal employment poses a major challenge to the protection of the rights of workers due to the lack of adequate social protection in many parts of the world. Recognising that everyone is entitled to equitable access to social protection, they strive to promote various social protection services including the expansion of social insurance to the informal sector. In the long term, a managed transition from informal to formal employment of workers is necessary to enhance the well-being of workers and their families, promote inclusive growth and eradicate poverty. Finally, they look forward to continued cooperation with all stakeholders to ensure the realisation of these fundamental rights for all.

On behalf of the **African Group, Ghana** explains that in 2022, the Heads of States and Governments of the African Union (AU) adopted a protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the rights of citizens to social protection and social security. The Protocol reaffirms AU's commitment to ensuring comprehensive social protection and social security for all citizens across the continent. Firstly, by recognising social protection as a human right that assists social protection to essential for human dignity and well-being. As noted during the discussion, people working within the informal economy are usually not covered by labour and social security laws, regulations and policies which expose them to discrimination, marginalisation, exploitation and abuse. Further, such people are typically a vulnerable group. The African Group therefore calls on states to take concrete steps towards the realisation of the rights to work and to social security in the informal economy. These include adopting appropriate regulation, institutional and operational framework for the provision of social protection and social security for workers in the informal economy. Ensuring progressive formalisation of the informal economy through enabling a legal and regulatory environment to sustainable enterprise skills development and progressive extension of labour and social protection.

According to **Viet Nam**, the informal sector makes a significant contribution to the economic development of many countries in the Asia-Pacific region. In Vietnam, ensuring social security for everyone, including workers in the informal sector, is enshrined in Article 34 of the Constitution from 2013. Aware of the challenges of the absence of social protection for informal workers makes it difficult for them to fully enjoy their rights and fundamental freedoms. Viet Bam has therefore put in place policies and measures to ensure that workers in the informal sectors are covered by social protection. It has a voluntary social security system and has amended a law on social insurance in May 2024 as part of its efforts to ensure that there are more benefits and





ensure gender equality in access to social security. It has also strengthened our international cooperation, notably with the International Labour Organisation and the World Bank, in order to exchange experiences on the practical implementation of certain models and adapt them to our own reality.

**Egypt** is proud of having submitted a resolution on the right to work with Indonesia, Greece and Romania, given that this is such a key right for the promotion of human rights and that it is part of bringing about social justice. At the national level, Egypt has provided nearly 80,000 jobs since 2024, reducing our unemployment rate as a result. It has also invested £8.5 billion in this sector. On social justice, it has devoted many billions for social protection. Egypt wants to include informal sector workers to find sustainable, effective work.

**El Salvador** has made progress in putting in place policies that try and close the gap when it comes to having access to decent work. It has a national strategy for decent work, promoting inclusive job opportunities and improving working conditions in all sectors. Workers' protection is essential in bringing about welfare for people throughout the world. The solid social security system strengthens our economy and social development. This remains one of the main challenges in the informal economy. El Salvador has tried to foster the inclusion of informal workers into the social security system, providing economic benefits. This reaffirms its commitment to bringing about decent working conditions for all. El Salvador has also developed mechanisms to favour the transition from the informal to the formal sector, including digital platforms and other modalities offering protection. It further promotes dialogue between the informal sector and the government to make sure that their needs are heard and taken into account in putting in place public policies. This is in line with ILO Convention 144.

The constitution of **Nepal** safeguards the right to social security. It is commonly observed in low-income countries that a significant proportion of people are employed in the informal sector and are deprived of decent jobs and fundamental rights at work, such as minimum wage, working hours, basic lives, a healthy and safe workplace and social security provision. Promoting the rights to work and social security is fundamental to ensure social justice and to build a peaceful and prosperous society. Therefore, it is important to regulate and facilitate the transition from an informal to a formal economy.

**Vanuatu** welcomes this panel discussion on the realisation of the rights to work and the social security and we thank the esteemed panellists for their remarks. In as much as supporting its international obligations, it is also about respecting its workers in the informal sector, in agriculture, in fisheries, care workers and in Vanuatu, in particular in the rural areas in which Vanuatu's population resides. During this discussion, several solutions and avenues have been raised. In our opinion, however, what is missing is a social and community solidarity that could transform a value into a system, a virtue into an obligation to enable the political and moral guarantee. It is in this sense that the protection of social solidarity is an indispensable activity for society itself from the point of view of social cohesion and collective well-being. Vanuatu therefore urges all Member States to make efforts and adopt policies aimed at strengthening the power of parents, families and communities because they are the guarantees of solidarity and protection for workers in both formal and informal economy.





The Government of **Iraq** firmly believes that we must act globally in order to improve for the situation of workers. States should be encouraged to provide decent work, training programmes and comprehensive social programmes that ensure worker protection. Iraq has made significant steps forward to promote the rights of workers. It promulgated new laws and repealed old ones. It has a law on social security and pensions and it is the State which pays employers contributions to the pensions fund. Iraq also addresses harassment in the workplace.

**Chile** has recognised that the informal economy is a global problem and it means that very many people work in conditions which are unsafe and unhealthy. They receive a wage below the minimum wage and they work for very long days without appropriate access to social protection. Given this, Chile has identified as one of the main challenges broadening the social security coverage. We also must tackle the lack of trade union representation which makes it very difficult to participate in public policy. We also have new technologies that do create new jobs but also increase our informal economic sector. In this regard, Chile has provided technical training and free training for informal workers which will contribute to the progressive development of economic, social and cultural rights. Chile is certain that protection of the right to work and social security is crucial, especially for groups requiring special protection such as migrants. This is why Chile has regularisation programmes and has set up rights protection bureaus as a support. It is essential to tackle these challenges with a view of the progressive development of human rights, promoting the protection of vulnerable sectors and reducing the informal economy.

The constitution of the Republic of **Mozambique** and the labour law guarantee the right to decent work with equal opportunity and without discrimination. However, as in many developing nations, informal labour continues to be challenged, covering the majority of our workforce, especially in rural areas. Mozambique's economic active population is approximately 85 percent, and employment rate 71 percent, with a strong presence in the agricultural sector. However, around 72 percent of the employed population is self-employed without employees, which demonstrates the predominance of informal employment. Despite the crucial role of the informal economy sector, it faces multiple challenges in guaranteeing the exercise of labour and social security rights, especially in the context of rapid technical change and growing climate impacts. The lack of formal employment relationship access to labour protection, social security, and benefits such as unemployment insurance and health care. The digital exclusion faced by informal workers also makes it difficult for them to take full advantage of the opportunities guaranteed by the new technologies. Faced with this situation, the Government of Mozambique has implemented concrete measures, including the expansion of the informal economy sector.

**Bahrain** believes that protecting workers, especially in informal economy, is not a legal obligation but also a human duty and a national responsibility. That is why Bahrain has been constantly working on developing our labour law, securing social protection, and countering all forms of exploitation, including human trafficking. Bahrain is the only country in the MENA region that has received the classification of Tier 1 in the State Department Report of Human Trafficking. It has also been able to secure this ranking for seven consecutive years. This classification is an achievement, and preserving it is a bigger challenge. It requires additional efforts and new initiatives in order to secure the highest standards of labour works. To achieve this goal, Bahrain launched a national strategy to combat human trafficking according to the best practises at the international level. Bahrain also has a national mechanism to provide social and legal protection



to victims of human trafficking based on cooperation with relevant stakeholders. Finally, Bahrain reiterates its commitment to continue developing its labour laws according to the highest labour standards so that we can be a model to be followed at the regional level.

Through its constitution and its international commitments, the **Democratic Republic of Congo** recognises the right to work and the right to social security as being essential human rights. The expansion of the informal economy represents a major challenge for the rights of workers, including the right to work and social security, and has a negative impact on the sustainable development of companies. Existing measures to provide social security and the right to work have been designed to protect persons engaged in the formal work sector and are not well adapted to the informal sector and for those vulnerable. To respond to these concerns, the DRC implemented an ambitious programme to reform social security. It has expanded the general social security regime to integrate independent workers of the informal and formal sector and groups of the population who are difficult to reach.

**Morocco** is convinced that social security is there to manage social risk and we need to make sure it is a virtual circle of development and growth. It allows us to reduce poverty in households and to increase social cohesion and stability, which promotes inclusive development in the country. For this reason, Morocco has generalised its system of social protection as one of the priorities of the Government for fair, inclusive and sustainable development. Morocco has made social justice a real priority, with a genuine commitment to make sure we see a fair and equal treatment of all members of society, including those working in the informal sector. In 2024, this reform allowed us to reach a large number of beneficiaries, and more than 11 million have been able to benefit from health care, 4.2 million families benefited from direct social aid, and 3 million pupils benefited from payments upon returning to school, and that is to the tune of some \$2.5 billion. This project has been welcomed by international organisations such as the World Bank, the IMF and the ILO.

**Kuwait** reiterates the importance of international initiatives such as the Decent Work Programme and the OPT, which is very important to protect the rights of Palestinian workers, especially in the light of the violations by the occupying power that prevents them from decent work. It calls upon the international community to support the right to decent work to all Palestinians without discrimination. At the national level, its Ministry of Social Work has a law on providing support to all citizens or residents who do not have an income in order to provide them with social assistance according to certain criteria and standards defined by the law on public assistance, and this is part of the right to social protection as enshrined in its Constitution. Kuwait reiterates its attachment to cooperate with international organisations in order to promote human rights and to secure their decent implementation.

**India** accords a high priority to the welfare of workers in the unorganised sector. While the Unorganised Workers' Social Security Act provides social security to these workers, the e-Shram portal mentioned by the SR is the world's largest database of unorganised sector workers, enabling streamlined delivery of benefits and welfare schemes. There is also a voluntary and contributory pension scheme that provides them with social security. Similarly, the Universal Health Coverage Scheme also benefits workers from the unorganised sector. The delivery of these benefits and welfare schemes to the people has been further accelerated through the transformative evolution of India's digital public infrastructure, which has set examples in large-



scale, speedy and transparent public service delivery, leading to financial inclusion and realisation of people's economic and social rights. The informal sector is one of the critical drivers of economic growth and livelihoods, particularly in developing countries. India recognises the need for international cooperation in addressing challenges such as informal employment vulnerabilities and the digital transformation of work. It remains ready to share experiences with our partners to support skill development, financial inclusion and decent work for all.

**Saudi Arabia** believes that the right is a fundamental right to all individuals and a society's prosperity. We have adopted many initiatives to promote equal opportunities and improve the labour environment so that everyone can enjoy work without discrimination. Saudi Arabia is working on developing our social protection architecture, especially for the most vulnerable components of society. Based on its commitment to achieve SDGs and comprehensive development, it promotes policies to expand social protection and to promote social and economic integration so that all workers can benefit from basic rights and decent working opportunities. It reiterates the importance of international cooperation to exchange best practises and to develop efficient strategies to promote social protection and working opportunity. Finally, Saudi Arabia remains committed to taking all necessary measures in order to promote the right to work and social protection in such a way to achieve social justice and to preserve the dignity of individuals in all economic sectors.

In **Bangladesh's** view, we are living in such a world where adverse impacts of climate change, sharp digital divides, inequality among and within the countries, gradual food insecurity, waves of pandemics are threatening global security, as well as exposing ineffectiveness of traditional economies. There have been high incidents of layoffs within the introduction of automation, along with new and emerging technologies in the industrial sector. Consequently, workers in the low-income and lower middle-income countries are forced to switch from formal to informal economies. It is shocking to note that 88.5% of total employment in low-income countries is stemming from the informal sector. Another harsh reality is that the workers of the informal economy are entitled to zero to nominal social protection. To this end, Bangladesh suggests the following: first, long-term social security system has to be embraced at the national level; second, nationally defined social protection floors should be established with allocation of adequate public funds; third, encouraging innovative solutions to eradicate unemployment with particular focus on small and medium enterprises is spearheaded by women; fourth, stimulating international cooperation and solidarity for enhancing social protection system in low-income countries.

According to **Romania**, the informal economy is a universal phenomenon, with data showing that around 60% of the world's population participates in the informal sector. Informal economy offers little benefits, does not ensure workers with protection, and promotes insecure jobs. But most importantly, informal economy is not only a radar of the level of poverty and inequality, including gender inequality, that shapes each society, but also a catalyst for it. Romania is taking active steps to tackle the negative effects of informal work through ongoing labour reforms, one of which especially dedicated to the formalisation of work in the field of domestic workers, by regulating the activity carried out within households. Its aim is to reduce undeclared work in the field of domestic services and increase the degree of social protection of those involved in these activities. Many depend on informal sector for their survival, not having access to formal work.



**Kazakhstan** is committed to creating an environment that fosters full and freely chosen employment and decent work for all, as a foundation for sustainable development. The primary objective of our national economic system is to support investment, growth and entrepreneurship, which is vital for generating new job opportunities without discrimination. Kazakhstan's social security system helps with a just transition by creating access to education, improving labour market opportunities and transitioning individuals into new sustainable jobs. Innovative approaches are being successfully implemented. These include an innovative navigator of production projects, which has led to the creation of 150,000 jobs and allows for the accurate prediction of personnel needs. The area reach of the month-up compass project is 100,000 students and over 200,000 individuals that have received guidance to help them choose a field of activity. Over 10,000 social workers have been trained on the development of skills. As part of the 2023 social code, 25% of the national budget, over 11.5 billion US dollars, is allocated for social assistance. The State provides targeted social assistance to support families whose monthly income is below the poverty line. Kazakhstan is dedicated to ensuring opportunities for all to obtain productive work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity.

**Malaysia** acknowledges the significant challenges faced by informal economy workers, particularly in light of technological advancements and climate change. It remains committed to ensuring their right to decent work and social protection. Two years ago, it established the Women Entrepreneurship Committee to support women including those in the formal sector. This multi-stakeholder initiative empowers women and facilitates their transition to the formal economy. Under the 2017 Self-Employment Social Security Act, Malaysia extends social protection to self-employed individuals in the informal sectors through the Self-Employment Social Security Scheme, covering employment injuries, accidents and occupational diseases. Recognising the importance of the care economy, Malaysia is committed to monetising unpaid care work by professionalising care services for the elderly children and persons with disabilities. To this end, it is finalising the Malaysian Care Industry Action Plan to recognise and certify care workers contributing to economic growth. As Malaysia continues strengthening the care economy, it welcomes collaboration with partners to enhance social security and fundamental rights for informal economy workers.

In **Cabo Verde's** view, the guarantee of labour and social security rights for those in the informal economy remains a global challenge and is ever more pressing a challenge given the profound transformations in the labour market and the multiple crises we are seeing and the advent of new technologies. In this context, we need increased collective commitment to reduce inequalities, promote dignity and ensure the inclusion of workers in the sector to make sure that their well-being in socioeconomic terms is ensured. In Cabo Verde, recent data says that 64% of workers benefit from social security coverage, but we are working to extend this to independent workers. Cabo Verde reasserts its determination to strengthen social protection for informal sector workers and is implementing inclusive and fair strategies which aim to expand this coverage, paying particular attention to the most vulnerable. To conclude, Cabo Verde reiterates its commitment to improve its legislative framework to establish public policies which will effectively ensure the right to work and the right to social security whilst making sure that we leave no one behind.



**Kenya** recognises the critical importance of the right to work and social security, particularly within our dynamic informal economy which provides a livelihood for a significant portion of our population. It welcomes this panel focus that aligns with Kenya's trajectory in formalising this sector, ensuring decent work and extending social protections to all. Kenya has undertaken several key policy interventions and legal framework adjustments. The Micro and Small Enterprises Act supports the growth and formalisation of small businesses through access to financing, training and simplified regulations. Targeted programmes to enhance skills and production in the informal sector focussing on women and youth are in place. Kenya's social security strategy aims to progressively extend social security coverage to informal sector workers through schemes tailored to their individual needs and income levels. Approaches including leveraging technology and mobile platforms to facilitate contributions and access to benefits are a key priority. Kenya acknowledges the challenges of data collection and enforcement in the informal sector. Kenya is strengthening our statistical capacity to promote awareness among informal workers about their rights and benefits to social security. It believes that through efforts and solutions, innovative solutions and policies, it can empower informal workers and ensure their right to decent work and social protection.

#### **Views Expressed by Inter-Governmental Organizations**

Stressing that European pillar of social rights aims to support fair labour markets and welfare systems, the the **European Union** further explains that the principle of economic and social cohesion is one of EU's strongest defining features balanced with policies having human rights at their core and striving for a human rights-based economy. Occupational safety and health in a changing labour market is among EU priorities. The 10th principle of the European pillar of social rights calls for healthy, safe and well-adapted work environment for all. Informal workers are highly exposed to difficult work environments. The adverse effects of informal work on full and effective enjoyment of human rights disproportionately affect inter-alia women and girls, young persons, persons with disabilities, refugees, asylum seekers and migrants. EU's targeted policies tackle informal economy and encourage preventive and curative measures. Together with other international actors, the EU supports a third country's efforts in achieving universal and sustainable social protection coverage in line with the human right to social protection and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and helps achieve decent work conditions.

**UNDP** sees the expansion of economic opportunities and holistic social protection systems as central to achieving the SDGs and promoting prosperity for all. Its work in over 170 countries focusses on enhancing people's capacities to access productive assets, quality jobs and sustainable livelihoods, while reinforcing social protection systems to build resilient societies against shocks and crises. Investment in quality jobs have proven to be a key driver of catalytic transformation, accelerating progress across sectors and fostering inclusive and sustainable development. As the world of work evolves due to technological advances, the digital and energy transitions, these investments must also support workers in adapting to emerging challenges and to harness opportunities, ensuring that no one is left behind. To make meaningful progress, we must support countries in their efforts to scale up and sustain what has already proven effective. By expanding these efforts and ensuring they are adequately financed, we can strengthen economic resilience, enhance social inclusion and uphold the right to work and social security for all.





According to [FAO](#), informality remains a major concern for workers in agri-food systems, which employ over 1.2 billion people globally. The sector has the highest rate of informal employment, estimated at over 90%. Workers, particularly seasonal and migrant workers, women, youth and Indigenous peoples, face significant challenges in enjoying their rights to decent work and social security. It is critical to prioritise policies to improve access to decent job opportunities and working conditions and to extend social security coverage to informal workers in agri-food systems. To address the social security gap, it is necessary to adapt social protection systems to the sector's risks and needs, including climate change, establish farmer registries and invest in economic inclusion programmes. A progressive transition towards formalisation must address these issues by implementing business environment reforms, providing financial incentives for formalisation and fostering group co-operation among informal workers. Furthermore, guaranteeing more secure land rights and engaging in responsible contract farming and other formalised value chain arrangements is key. Engaging agricultural stakeholders in meaningful dialogue is equally important.

The guaranteed by the [Council of Europe](#) through the European Social Charter concern all individuals in their daily lives. Among others, the Charter protects individual and collective labour rights, such as the right to safe and healthy working conditions, the right to organise and bargain collectively and the right to social security. The European Committee of Social Rights, which monitors the effective implementation of the Charter, acknowledge that the world of work is changing rapidly, with a proliferation of contractual arrangements as well as an increasing number of workers falling outside the definition of dependent worker. The majority of these workers in the so-called platform or gig economy do not necessarily fall under the informal economy. However, their situation can be precarious. The Committee observed that there are significant gaps in their social coverage. State parties must take steps to ensure that all workers in new forms of employment have an appropriate legal status, thus avoiding abuse and conferring adequate social security rights. The European Social Charter represents an essential component of the continent's human rights architecture, and the Council of Europe remains committed to guaranteeing fundamental social and economic rights.

### [Views Expressed by Non-Governmental Organizations](#)

According to [Sikh Human Rights Group](#), no matter which news outlet you turn to, poli-crisis is everywhere, economic, environmental, you name it. Are we doomed? I hope not. Let's focus on what is within our reach and on the issue before us today, social security in the informal economy. Many have highlighted the multiplicative effects of gender-sensitive policies. As has been repeatedly highlighted, a significant share of those engaged in the care economy are women. On top of this, their work is either poorly remunerated or not paid at all. Pension system must have a redistributive effect and recognise that unpaid care is a collective responsibility. Once again, marginalised groups bear the greatest burden. Furthermore, as the report points out, a staggering 63% of women with newborns lack maternity benefits. Furthermore, as the report points out, a staggering 63% of women with newborns lack maternity benefits. All this leads to the following. First, let us extend social protection with a focus on women and those in care economy. Second, let us reinforce paid parental leave for both childbearing and non-childbearing parents. Third, let us fund and guarantee affordable childcare. Not only would this reduce the gender pay gap, but it would also generate substantial employment, with costs offset by tax revenues. Lastly, let us





reshape the international financial system, which in its current state fails to provide many countries with the fiscal space necessary to fund social spending.

According to [Centre Europe Tiers Monde](#), today, precarious employment or workers in informal sectors represent 60% of the working population in the world. These are persons that have no social insurance. The root of this problem is to be found in the way production is organised and in the general approach of economic policies. As analysed in its recent report on economic, social and cultural rights, neoliberal economic policies have deeply changed the economic environment and labour relations. Relocations, anti-trade union practises, precarious employment and unemployment have become banal events and even acceptable, just like regression and the dismantling of labour laws. Given this context, we must question the fact that social security is dependent on the existence of paid work, given that it is still the key element in setting up a social security system pursuant to existing laws. The UNHRC and its mechanisms must therefore support States in their efforts to ensure their legislation is in line with human rights commitments and labour laws. States must strengthen public services and ensure that individual interests do not have primacy over the general interest. There must be a global commitment to ensure that everyone can be decent work and social security which is worthy of this name.

The [China NGO Network for International Exchanges](#) explains that, as developing country, China's vast rural areas were most peasants on their own land. The half-work, half-farming model, which combines agricultural work with off-farm employment, has become the preferred livelihood strategy for many peasants. With the increasing mechanisation of agriculture, farming has become efficient, allowing farmers to allocate time and energy to short-term work outside their land. This supplementary income, often referred to as part-time income, helps improve their living standards. My friend is one such farmer. He has a family of four, including two children, and owns eight acres of land. During non-farming seasons, he and his friends travel to the city for construction work. When it is time to plant or harvest, they return home. Xinjiang's ongoing development has created numerous short-term job opportunities, making it easier for farmers to find work. Agriculture income remains the primary source of livelihoods supplemented by short-term jobs. To protect workers' rights and interests, local governments offer free technical training programmes. Additionally, labour inspection departments actively address complaints from peasants facing difficulties in off-farm employment, ensuring their rights are safeguarded, even in informal economy.

The [International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse](#) explains that older persons face ageism and age discrimination in the labour market, with mandatory retirement ages, age limits in recruitment, negative stereotypes about their abilities, and lack of training and career advancement. A fundamental rethink on the right to work for older persons enshrined in a UN convention is needed for those who must or wish to continue working. Social security that is exclusively linked to contributory pensions particularly discriminates against older women who have either lower income patterns, generally in the informal economy, or no income at all. Most older persons continue working in the informal economy, not by choice, but due to insufficient income. Older persons should have the right to compensate for inadequate pensions to ensure a decent standard of living. Older persons have the right to decent work on an equal basis with others and to determine when we withdraw from the labour force and at what pace. The Network



urges States to adopt at this session a resolution to establish an intergovernmental working group to draft an international legally binding instrument on the rights of older persons.

**Themis Gender Justice and Human Rights** stresses that domestic workers are the base of societies worldwide. These women suffer human rights violations on a daily basis. Focus on this situation provides states and the UN the opportunity to achieve a long-lasting solution for the path to the future. The decent work involves social security as a parachute-style protection. It has already been demonstrated that those who can enjoy it manage to avoid new forms of right violations. The lack of formality though is one of the main obstacles even among the countries that had ratified convention 189 on domestic work. Therefore, it requests two things. One, the domestic work has to be in all social security programmes in action as a special group. Two, promote both affiliation and maintenance in social security system taking into account the diversity of employment and the lack of formalisation of this group. Domestic work is the first option for those on vulnerability. Their safety can be critical not only for them and their community, but also to ensure commitment on several areas of human rights.

According to **Human Rights Watch**, a growing concern for the realisation of the rights to work and social security is the rise of platform work, also known as gig work, where workers perform jobs for digital labour platforms like Uber. Platform workers are routinely excluded from labour protections, including minimum wage laws, collective bargaining rights, and much of social security. HRW's research in the United States, Georgia, Mexico, and the EU shows that without proper regulation, companies misclassify platform workers as independent contractors, shifting business costs and risks onto workers while avoiding social security contributions. In Texas, we found that full-time platform workers earned just 30% of a living wage, leaving them at financial risk. An accident, sudden illness, or wrongful termination pushed them into debt or homelessness, while companies expand their market share and deprive social security systems of critical funding. Its research further found that companies use a range of technologies and behavioural tactics to manage and control workers while maintaining the illusion that they work independently, thereby eroding labour rights. It urges governments to strengthen employment classification laws to prevent misclassification and support an international convention to safeguard platform workers' rights during the 113th and 14th International Labour Conferences. Without reforms, platform work will continue to trap workers in poverty wages and deepen economic inequality.

The **Global Institute for Water, Environment and Health** emphasizes that the right to work and social security are fundamental human rights, yet millions of informal workers remain unprotected, facing exploitation and a lack of legal safeguards. It draws attention to the United Arab Emirates where migrant workers, particularly in construction and services, continue to suffer from labour rights violations, wage theft and precarious working conditions despite international commitments. Although the UAE hosted COP28 and participated in COP29, it has not aligned its labour policies with principles of fair and sustainable employment. Migrant workers who built COP28 infrastructure were underpaid, overworked and lacked proper housing or social protection. The Kafala sponsorship system, despite some reforms, still restricts worker mobility and fosters forced labour. Moreover, the UAE has not established a comprehensive social security system for informal workers. Labour laws favour employers and lack effective enforcement mechanisms to ensure fair wages and access to health care. It calls on the UAE to



uphold its human rights obligations to strengthen worker protection and to ensure dignified employment for all.

Welcoming this critical discussion and its relevance for women and caregiving responsibilities, particularly mothers, **Make Mothers Matter** stresses that women are often forced to live in or even up and down formal work due to caregiving responsibility, and caregiving work they provide is vital, yet largely unpaid and unrecognised. As a result, far too many mothers are left without social protection. Globally, 35% of new mothers have full access to maternity protection, leading to a direct consequence, not only for their own health and well-being, but also for the health and future of their own children. This lack of support also jeopardises their financial security and a long-term autonomy. Investing in mothers is not merely a human rights issue. It's a high-return investment. Mothers are the backbone of the society, frontline health workers, primary nurturers, and the first educator for their children. Their unpaid care work demands time-recognised and dedicated support. It urges countries to prioritise investment in universal social protection based on social protection floors. Caregivers must be recognised, granted proper status, and specially targeted within these policies. Supporting mothers is the smartest investment in our collective future.

The **Beijing Migrant Workers Legal Aid and Research Centre** calls on the United Nations to pay urgent attention to the social security rights of platform workers. The rapid development of the digital economy has given rise to the platform economy with an ever-growing workforce of platform workers. However, this emerging labour force is facing a widespread lack of social security protection. According to data from the International Labour Organisation, there are over 100 million platform workers worldwide, yet more than half of them lack basic social security coverage. The root cause of this lack of social security lies in the mismatch between this new form of employment and the traditional labour frameworks. Platform companies often classify workers as independent contractors rather than employees, thereby evading their legal obligations to contribute to social security benefits. The issue of social security for platform workers is a significant challenge for the global labour market in the era of the digital economy. It calls on the international community to work together, explore innovative solutions, and build a fair, inclusive, and sustainable platform economy. Every platform worker deserves the right to decent work and a dignified life.

**Rajasthan Samgrah Kalyan Sansthan (RSKS)** acknowledges the significance of realising the right to social security and providing equality public services, especially for persons with disabilities. It believes in inclusive practises that ensure the participation of all stakeholders, including persons with disabilities, from the planning stage to the feedback process. Social security ensures that individuals have access to basic necessities such as healthcare, education, and housing, thereby reducing poverty and inequality. In its efforts to provide equality public services, it prioritises inclusivity by actively involving persons with disabilities in decision-making processes. This includes consulting them during the planning phase to understand their specific needs and challenges. India's initiatives such as the National Social Assistance Programme and the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act aims to provide social protection and employment opportunities to marginalised communities, including persons with disabilities. Additionally, India has made efforts to enhance accessibility in public spaces and services through legislation such as the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act. To conclude, it



acknowledges the role of the UN and partner countries to improve collaboration and resource allocation towards promoting the right to social security and equality public services.

### **FACTS & FIGURES ON ID PARTICIPATION**

#### **24** State Delegations

- Including 1 high-level dignitary

#### **4** Inter-Governmental Organizations

#### **10** Non-Governmental Organizations