



STUDY GUIDE

UN COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

No Employer, No Maternity Leave, No
Hearing: Women in the Platform Economy
and the Protections that were never
extended to them.

31 Oct - 01 Nov 2026

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the Commission on the Status of Women at Sabarmati Model United Nations 2026.

There is a particular trap waiting for this committee, and we want to name it before you fall into it. The trap is treating platform work as obviously bad. It is not obviously bad. For a very large number of women, app-based work is the first paid work they have been able to take without asking anyone's permission, without a commute they cannot make, and without a schedule that collides with a child's school hours. When researchers ask women why they chose platform work, flexibility and autonomy come back as genuine answers, not as marketing language they have absorbed. Any delegate who stands up and argues that this work should simply be abolished or fully converted into standard employment will be met, correctly, with the question of what the woman doing it is supposed to do on Monday.

The real problem is narrower and harder. Platform work delivers flexibility by removing the employment relationship, and almost every protection won for working women over the last century was attached to the employment relationship. Maternity leave was attached to it. Harassment redress was attached to it. Occupational safety duties were attached to it. The right to be told why you were dismissed and to answer the charge was attached to it. Remove the employer and all of it goes, not through anyone's malice, but through a definitional gap.

Something significant happened while you were preparing for this conference. In June 2026 the International Labour Conference adopted the first binding international standard on platform work. That changes your committee's job. You are no longer arguing about whether an international standard should exist. You are arguing about what happens next: ratification, the parts of the problem the Convention did not settle, and the specifically gendered gaps that a general labor standard does not reach on its own. That is a better and more difficult debate than the one this agenda would have produced a year ago.

Read Section 6 carefully, because the legal picture changed recently and delegates working from older material will be operating on out-of-date assumptions. Read Sections 10 through 12 twice. And bring a position paper that says what your country actually does, including where it does nothing.

We are looking forward to your work.

The Executive Board

INTRODUCTION TO THE COMMITTEE

Where are you sitting, and what can you actually do? This is the oldest dedicated gender equality body in the United Nations system, and it is also one of the most constrained. Knowing the constraint is what will stop you from drafting something the Commission cannot produce.

The Commission on the Status of Women was established by Economic and Social Council resolution 11(II) of 21 June 1946, which makes 2026 its eightieth year. It is a functional commission of ECOSOC, not an organ of the General Assembly and not a treaty body. It is serviced by UN Women, and it is the principal global intergovernmental body dedicated exclusively to gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Composition:

- **Forty five member states**, elected by ECOSOC for four year terms.
- **Seats allocated by regional group:** thirteen for African States, eleven for Asia-Pacific States, nine for Latin American and Caribbean States, eight for Western European and Other States, and four for Eastern European States.
- **Observers welcome.** Any UN member state, UN entity, and thousands of ECOSOC-accredited non-governmental organizations may attend and speak. The annual session in New York is the largest gender equality gathering in the world.

The Decision Rule: The Commission's flagship output on its priority theme is the agreed conclusions, a negotiated text adopted at the end of the session. For its entire history these were adopted by consensus. That changed at the seventieth session in March 2026, when the agreed conclusions on access to justice for women and girls were adopted by a recorded vote of 37 in favor, 1 against and 6 abstentions, after amendments proposed by one delegation were rejected as a package. This matters for you procedurally and politically. It means a bloc can now carry a text over objection, and it also means that the cost of doing so is the loss of the moral weight consensus carried.

What the Commission produces: Agreed conclusions on the priority theme, resolutions transmitted to ECOSOC, and recommendations that feed into the General Assembly and into the follow-up architecture of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action of 1995. It also receives communications on the status of women through a confidential procedure that identifies trends rather than resolving individual cases.

What This Committee Cannot Do:

- **It cannot create binding obligations.** Agreed conclusions are recommendations to states and to the wider UN system. They carry considerable normative weight and no legal force.
- **It cannot adopt a labor standard.** International labor standards are made by the International Labour Conference, through its tripartite structure of governments, employers and workers. The Commission can urge ratification of an ILO Convention; it cannot write one.
- **It cannot interpret or enforce CEDAW.** That is the function of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, a separate treaty body of independent experts. Do not confuse the two in a speech.
- **It cannot regulate a company.** No platform is subject to this Commission. Any measure affecting a platform has to run through a state that has jurisdiction over it.
- **It cannot direct national legislatures.** It can recommend legislative measures and it frequently does, in considerable detail, but the addressee is always the government.

Pro Tip: The verbs here are softer than in most committees and you should lean into that rather than fight it. Agreed conclusions typically read “Urges Governments to,” “Calls upon Governments and other relevant stakeholders to,” “Recommends that,” and “Invites the entities of the United Nations system to.” The strongest available formulation is usually a call to take a specific, named, verifiable action, such as ratifying a particular instrument or extending a particular statutory scheme. Vague strength loses to specific softness every time in this room.

INTRODUCTION TO THE AGENDA

Why does this matter, and why now? Because the international standard that did not exist a year ago now exists, and the question in front of every government has moved from whether to regulate platform work to what to do about the parts the standard left open.

Start with what platform work actually is. A digital labor platform intermediates between a worker and a client. Location-based platforms cover ride-hailing, delivery, domestic and care work, and beauty services. Online web-based platforms cover data annotation, content moderation, transcription, translation and freelance professional work. The gender composition differs sharply between them and delegates who treat platform work as a single category will make errors. Ride-hailing skews heavily male in most markets. Beauty, cleaning and care platforms skew heavily female. Online microwork has substantial female participation, often invisible because it happens at home.

The core legal fact is that in most jurisdictions the platform worker is classified as an independent contractor, meaning a self-employed person contracting with a client, rather than as an employee. That classification is not a technicality. It is the switch that turns off almost every protective statute a country has.

Four protections that switch off:

- **Maternity provision.** Statutory maternity leave and maternity cash benefits are, in most systems, employment-linked. A self-employed worker in a country without a universal or contributory scheme open to her simply has no entitlement. There is no employer to grant leave and no payroll from which a benefit is calculated.
- **Harassment redress.** Anti-harassment law generally imposes duties on an employer and creates a mechanism inside a workplace. Where there is no employer and no workplace, a worker harassed by a client has, at best, a criminal complaint and a customer service form.
- **Occupational safety duties.** Safety law places obligations on the person who controls the workplace. On a platform, no one is deemed to control the street, the customer's home, or the stairwell.
- **Due process before termination.** Deactivation from a platform ends the worker's income as completely as a dismissal does. Because it is not a dismissal, no notice, no reasons, and no hearing are legally required. Where the decision is made by an automated system, there may be no human decision-maker to address at all.

Consider this scenario, which is illustrative rather than a documented case but which reflects patterns repeatedly described in research and litigation. A woman works through a home services platform. A client behaves inappropriately during a booking. She leaves and reports it. The client, whose account remains active, rates her one star. Her average rating falls below the threshold the platform uses. The system reduces the jobs offered to her, then suspends her account. She receives a notification. There is no named person to appeal to, and the platform's position is that she was never its employee. Every single step in that sequence is lawful in most jurisdictions today.

Why now, specifically? Three reasons. First, the International Labour Conference adopted a binding Convention on decent work in the platform economy on 12 June 2026, which creates a ratification question in every capital represented in this room. Second, the European Union's Platform Work Directive must be transposed into national law by 2 December 2026, roughly two months after this committee sits, which means Europe's approach is about to become concrete rather than theoretical. Third, the Commission's own priority theme at its seventieth session in March 2026 was access to justice for women and girls, and the platform worker with no forum in which to be heard is one of the sharpest live examples of what that theme was about.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

How did we get here? The protections at issue took a century to build, and they were all built on a single assumption that platform work quietly removed.

The employment relationship as the container for rights, 1919 to 1970. The International Labour Organization was created in 1919 and adopted a Maternity Protection Convention in its first year. From the beginning, the architecture of labor protection assumed a bilateral, continuing relationship between an identifiable employer and a worker under that employer's direction. Everything was hung on that hook: working time, minimum wages, safety duties, social insurance contributions, and later, anti-discrimination and dismissal protection.

Women's rights attach to the same hook, 1951 to 1981. Convention No. 100 on equal remuneration in 1951 and Convention No. 111 on discrimination in employment in 1958 addressed women's position within the employment relationship. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, adopted in 1979 and in force from 1981, took the same approach in article 11, which requires states to eliminate discrimination in employment and specifically obliges them to introduce maternity leave with pay or comparable social benefits. Note the assumption embedded in that sentence: pay implies a payer.

The informality problem was always known, 1972 onward. Development economists identified the informal sector in the early 1970s, and the ILO has spent fifty years on the fact that most of the world's workers were never inside the container in the first place. Recommendation No. 204 in 2015 on the transition from the informal to the formal economy is the culmination of that work. This history matters enormously for your committee, because delegates from countries with large informal economies will point out, accurately, that platform work did not invent unprotected labor. In many countries it formalized work that was previously entirely undocumented, by putting it through a traceable digital transaction.

The platform arrives, 2009 to 2020. Ride-hailing, delivery and home services platforms scaled globally in this decade. Litigation followed almost immediately, and it went in several directions at once. In the United Kingdom, the Supreme Court held in *Uber BV v Aslam* in February 2021 that drivers were workers, an intermediate statutory category entitling them to minimum wage and holiday pay though not to full employee rights. In California, legislation in 2019 created a strong statutory test for employee status, and a ballot measure in 2020, Proposition 22, carved app-based drivers out of it; the California Supreme Court upheld Proposition 22 in 2024. In Spain, a 2021 statute known as the rider law created a presumption of employment for delivery riders. The same question produced opposite answers in comparable legal systems, which should tell you something about how genuinely difficult the classification question is.

Regulation catches up, 2020 to 2026. India's Code on Social Security, 2020 became the first national law anywhere to define the terms gig worker and platform worker and to contemplate social security schemes for them, though implementation has been slow and the Code's provisions have not been fully brought into force. Indian states moved faster: Rajasthan enacted a platform-based gig workers welfare statute in 2023 establishing a registration system and a welfare board funded by a levy on platform transactions, and Karnataka followed with comparable legislation. The European Union adopted its Platform Work Directive in 2024, introducing a rebuttable presumption of employment and, importantly, the first binding rules on algorithmic management.

The standard-setting decision, 2023 to 2026. The ILO Governing Body placed platform work on the International Labour Conference agenda for a double discussion. The first discussion at the 113th session in 2025 ended without agreement on most of the text, with roughly fifteen per cent of the draft settled. The Conference nevertheless resolved to proceed to a second discussion and, on 12 June 2026, adopted the Decent Work in the Platform Economy Convention, 2026. The accompanying Recommendation could not be negotiated in the time available; the Conference instead adopted a resolution urging ratification and implementation of the Convention. That sequence tells you how contested the substance was, and it tells you where the unfinished business sits.

THE CURRENT SITUATION

What is actually true today? Start with the numbers, and be careful, because measurement in this sector is genuinely difficult and the range of published estimates is wide for reasons that are methodological rather than political.

The scale. Trade union federations reporting on the 2026 Convention described it as covering more than 150 million people who earn a living through digital labor platforms. Treat that as an order-of-magnitude estimate rather than a census. Counting platform workers is hard for three structural reasons: many work across multiple platforms and would be double counted; many work occasionally rather than continuously, so the number depends entirely on whether you count anyone who worked in the last year or only those who work weekly; and platforms rarely publish worker counts in a form that separates active from registered accounts. When you use a number in this committee, say which of those it is measuring. A delegate who explains why estimates diverge is more credible than one who picked the biggest number available.

The gender composition. Women's share of platform work varies enormously by sector and by country, and the aggregate figure conceals more than it reveals. Ride-hailing and delivery are male-dominated in nearly every market studied, often overwhelmingly so, with safety concerns and vehicle ownership both cited as barriers. Domestic work, beauty services and care platforms are female-dominated. Online web-based work, including data annotation and microtasking, has substantial female participation. The policy consequence is important: a measure designed around delivery riders, which is what most public debate is about, may not reach the sectors where most women platform workers actually are.

What the new Convention does. The Decent Work in the Platform Economy Convention, adopted on 12 June 2026, is the first legally binding international instrument dedicated to platform work. According to the accounts published by participating worker organizations, it applies to all platform workers, whether in the formal or the informal economy, which is a significant drafting choice for developing countries. Its provisions cover timely and fair remuneration including cost recovery, measures to extend social protection, occupational safety and health including a right to remove oneself from a dangerous situation without retaliation, protection against violence and harassment at work, safeguards for workers' personal data and privacy, additional protections for migrant and refugee workers, and guarantees of accessible, safe, fair and effective dispute resolution with appropriate remedies.

Read that list carefully and notice what is in it and what is not. Dispute resolution and remedy are in it, which is the direct answer to the no hearing element of your agenda. Data and privacy safeguards are in it, which reaches algorithmic management. Violence and harassment is in it, which extends the principle of the Violence and Harassment Convention of 2019 to this

category of worker. What the Convention does not do is resolve employment classification for every worker in every state, because that was the question the tripartite process could not settle. And a Convention binds only states that ratify it, and only after ratification and entry into force. As of this committee's sitting, the ratification count is the number that matters, and it is early.

The transposition moment in Europe. Directive (EU) 2024/2831 on improving working conditions in platform work entered into force in December 2024 with a transposition deadline of 2 December 2026. It requires member states to establish a rebuttable presumption of employment where facts indicating control and direction are present, with the burden falling on the platform to rebut it. It also regulates algorithmic management directly: restrictions on processing certain categories of personal data, a requirement of human oversight of automated decisions, and a right to an explanation and to human review of decisions that significantly affect a worker, including restriction, suspension or termination of an account. That last provision is the closest thing in existing law to a right to a hearing on deactivation.

The Indian picture, which is directly relevant to this room. The Code on Social Security, 2020 defines gig workers and platform workers and contemplates aggregator contributions toward social security schemes, but its implementation has been partial. Rajasthan's 2023 statute created a registration and welfare board model funded by a transaction-level levy, and Karnataka enacted comparable legislation. The e-Shram portal provides a national registration mechanism for unorganized workers. Delegates should understand what the welfare board model does and does not do: it creates a fund and a benefit stream without resolving employment status, which is precisely the trade-off your committee has to evaluate.

The gendered gaps that a general standard does not close. Even a fully implemented platform work standard leaves four problems that are specifically about women workers.

- **Maternity is not merely income replacement.** A rider or home services worker who stops working for fourteen weeks loses her position in the platform's allocation system, her ratings recency, and often her account standing. Cash benefit alone does not restore any of that.
- **Safety exposure is different in kind.** A woman entering a client's home alone, or delivering to a residential address at night, faces a risk profile that a general occupational safety clause does not obviously address.
- **Rating systems transmit customer bias.** Where allocation depends on ratings and ratings come from customers, discriminatory customer preferences are converted into an income effect without any discriminatory act by the platform. Existing anti-discrimination law struggles with this because there is no discriminating decision-maker.

- **Unpaid care work explains the demand.** Women take platform work disproportionately because it accommodates care responsibilities. That means any reform that reduces flexibility in order to increase protection falls hardest on exactly the workers the reform is meant to help.

Think of the protection system as a building with a single load-bearing wall. Every room, meaning maternity, safety, harassment redress and dismissal protection, is attached to the employment relationship. Platform work did not knock down individual rooms. It removed the wall, and the rooms came down together. That is why piecemeal fixes keep failing, and it is also why the two serious solutions are either to rebuild the wall through reclassification, or to detach the rooms and attach them to the person instead.

LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

What rules bind us? A great deal of soft law, one very new hard law instrument, and a treaty most states in this room have already ratified.

The treaty obligation most delegates overlook. Article 11 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women is the strongest binding text available to this committee, because 189 states are parties, which is close to universal. Article 11, paragraph 1 requires the elimination of discrimination in the field of employment, including the right to social security and the right to protection of health and safety in working conditions. Article 11, paragraph 2, subparagraph (b) requires states to introduce maternity leave with pay or with comparable social benefits without loss of former employment, seniority or social allowances.

Now notice the argumentative opening. The obligation is framed around the field of employment. A state whose maternity scheme excludes self-employed and platform workers can argue that it has complied. A delegate on the other side can argue that a classification which excludes the majority of women in a growing sector produces discrimination in effect, which CEDAW addresses through the concept of indirect discrimination, meaning a rule that is neutral on its face but disproportionate in impact. That is a real legal argument, not a rhetorical one, and it is the strongest doctrinal move available in this committee. Related guidance appears in the CEDAW Committee's general recommendations, including No. 16 on unpaid women workers and No. 26 on women migrant workers.

The ILO framework, which is the substantive spine.

- **Convention No. 193 on Decent Work in the Platform Economy (2026)**, the first binding standard on this subject, adopted 12 June 2026. Ratification status is the live question.
- **Convention No. 183 on Maternity Protection (2000)**, which sets a minimum of fourteen weeks of maternity leave and cash benefits at a level enabling the woman to maintain herself and her child in proper conditions of health and a suitable standard of living. Its ratification level is modest, which is itself a debating point.
- **Convention No. 190 on Violence and Harassment (2019)**, which is the most useful instrument in this whole framework for your agenda because of how it is drafted. It protects workers irrespective of their contractual status, and it defines the world of work to include public spaces and places where work is performed. A delivery worker harassed on a street is inside its scope. A state that has ratified C190 has already accepted the principle your resolution needs.

- **Recommendation No. 204 (2015)** on the transition from the informal to the formal economy, which supplies the vocabulary for extending protection without requiring reclassification.
- **Convention No. 189 on Domestic Workers (2011)**, directly relevant because home-services platforms are frequently domestic work with an app attached.

The regional and national layer. Directive (EU) 2024/2831 is the most developed regulatory model, with its presumption of employment and its algorithmic management chapter. Spain's rider law of 2021 and the United Kingdom's worker category as applied in *Uber BV v Aslam* represent two different judicial and legislative routes. India's Code on Social Security, 2020 and the Rajasthan and Karnataka state statutes represent the welfare board route. Cite these accurately and do not overstate them. The Code on Social Security defines platform workers but has not been fully operationalized, and delegates who describe India as having implemented gig worker social security will be corrected by delegates who live under that law.

The soft law layer. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action of 1995, particularly its strategic objectives on women and the economy, remains the framework document for this Commission. The 2030 Agenda supplies Sustainable Development Goal 5 on gender equality, target 5.4 on recognizing unpaid care and domestic work, and Goal 8 on decent work, including target 8.5 on full and productive employment. The Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights supply the due diligence vocabulary that applies to platforms as business enterprises.

Distinguish three things. What a treaty text obliges, what a state has actually enacted, and what a commentator argues the text should mean. C190 obliges parties to protect workers irrespective of contractual status; it does not by itself create a harassment complaint mechanism inside a platform. The EU Directive creates a presumption in law; whether any given member state's transposing statute delivers it is a separate question that will be answered after 2 December 2026. Keep these apart in your speeches and you will avoid the most common way delegates lose credibility on this agenda.

KEY STAKEHOLDERS AND BLOC POSITIONS

Who wants what, and who is your ally? The fault lines here are not the ones you expect. This is not a rich-versus-poor debate; it is a debate about whether protection should be attached to a contract or to a person, and that question splits every regional group.

The European Union and Like-Minded States

Core position: Misclassification is the root problem. A rebuttable presumption of employment, combined with binding rules on algorithmic management, is the answer.

Stated justification: Workers performing work under direction are employees in substance, and the law should follow substance rather than contractual labeling.

Actual interest: Protecting a social model financed by employer contributions. If a large share of the workforce shifts to self-employment, the contributory base of the welfare state erodes. This is a fiscal interest as much as a rights interest, and it is a legitimate one.

Fracture line: Member states are transposing the Directive with meaningful variation, and several have domestic platform sectors lobbying hard against a strong presumption. Expect European delegations to be less unified in this room than their public positions suggest.

States with Large Informal Economies

Core position: Reclassification is the wrong instrument. Protection should be extended to the person through registration, portable benefits and public schemes, without requiring an employment relationship that most of the workforce has never had.

Stated justification: Recommendation No. 204 and the formalization agenda. A rule that only helps workers who can be reclassified helps a minority.

Actual interest: Attracting and retaining digital sector investment, avoiding a compliance burden that pushes work back into cash transactions, and managing a fiscal base that cannot absorb large mandated employer contributions.

Fracture line: This bloc is genuinely divided between governments that see registration as a first step toward protection and governments that see it as a substitute for it. Also watch the tension between national governments and subnational governments that have legislated ahead of them.

Latin American and Caribbean States

Core position: Sympathetic to reclassification in principle, with strong constitutional traditions of labor protection, but facing very high informality rates that limit what reclassification can deliver.

Stated justification: The social function of labor law and constitutional guarantees of dignified work.

Actual interest: Several states have active litigation and legislative processes and want international language that supports the position their domestic institutions have already taken.

Fracture line: Courts in this region have reached different conclusions in similar cases, so a delegation's position often tracks its most recent national ruling rather than a stable policy.

African Group

Core position: The priority is extending any protection at all, in a context where the majority of women's work has always been informal, and platform work is a small but rapidly growing share.

Stated justification: The right to social security, and the need for standards that are achievable rather than aspirational.

Actual interest: Digital economy growth, youth employment, and avoiding standards written for markets with high formal employment and mature social insurance systems.

Fracture line: Substantial variation in state capacity to administer any registration or benefits system, which means some delegations will support ambitious language and others will resist the same language on implementation grounds rather than principle.

Asia-Pacific States

Core position: Highly varied, ranging from advanced social insurance systems to states where platform work is the primary formalizing force in the labor market.

Stated justification: National circumstances and the principle that labor market regulation is a domestic competence.

Actual interest: Several states in this group host major platform companies or major platform workforces, and some host both. India is the clearest case of a state legislating actively at both national and state level.

Fracture line: The division between states that see platform work as a threat to an existing formal sector and states that see it as an upgrade to an informal one.

Non-State Actors Shaping the Outcome

- **Platform companies.** Their consistent position is that they are technology intermediaries connecting independent providers with clients, and that flexibility and worker classification are inseparable. They have generally supported a limited third category with defined benefits.
- **Global union federations and platform worker organizations.** They drove the standard-setting process to a Convention over employer opposition and are now focused on ratification. Watch for the argument that a third category is a trap.
- **Women's rights and informal worker organizations.** Organizations working on informal and home-based women's work bring the perspective that the employment relationship has never been the container for most women's labor, and that solutions designed around it will miss most women.
- **Social insurance administrators.** Rarely discussed and quietly decisive, because the feasibility of any portable benefits proposal depends on whether the state can actually collect and disburse at transaction level.

If your country is not covered above, find six things before writing. First, does your national law define a gig or platform worker, and where? Second, is your state a party to CEDAW, and does it maintain any reservation to article 11? Third, has it ratified ILO Conventions No. 183 and No. 190? Fourth, does your maternity benefit scheme cover self-employed women, and if so, is it contributory or tax-funded? Fifth, what is the female labor force participation rate and what share of women's employment is informal? Sixth, is there any pending litigation or draft legislation on platform worker status? Those six answers give you a defensible position on every clause in this committee.

CASE STUDIES

What has been tried, and what happened? Four models, chosen because each answers the classification question differently.

Spain's rider law: presumption of employment. Legislation in 2021 created a presumption that delivery riders working through platforms that manage their work via algorithm are employees, and gave workers' representatives a right to information about the algorithms affecting working conditions. Reported effects were mixed and are still debated: some platforms converted riders to employee status, at least one major platform withdrew from the market for a period, and researchers have reported the growth of intermediary subcontracting arrangements. The lesson is that a presumption changes the legal default effectively, and that the market responds by reorganizing around it.

California: legislation, then a ballot measure. A 2019 statute established a strict test making most app-based drivers employees. In 2020, a ballot measure funded largely by platform companies carved app-based drivers out of it and substituted a defined package of benefits, including a healthcare stipend and an earnings floor tied to engaged time only. The California Supreme Court upheld the measure in 2024. This is the clearest available example of the third-category model being adopted through a democratic process, and of the specific design choice that critics focus on: an earnings floor calculated on engaged time excludes waiting time, which is a substantial share of a working day.

India's welfare board model: protection without classification. The Code on Social Security, 2020 defined gig and platform workers in national law for the first time and contemplated aggregator contributions to fund schemes, though implementation has been partial. Rajasthan's 2023 statute went further operationally, creating registration, a unique identifier, a welfare board with worker representation, and a fee levied on platform transactions to fund it. Karnataka enacted comparable legislation. What this model does is decouple benefit entitlement from employment status entirely: the worker is registered as a person, the levy is collected per transaction, and the board disburses. What it does not do is give the worker a hearing before deactivation, a maternity leave entitlement in the sense article 11 of CEDAW contemplates, or a bargaining counterpart. Evaluate it on both halves.

The 2026 Convention: the standard itself as a case study. The negotiation is instructive because of how it failed and then succeeded. The 2025 first discussion settled roughly fifteen per cent of the text amid strong employer opposition. The 2026 session produced a Convention but ran out of time to negotiate the accompanying Recommendation, which is where the detailed implementation guidance would normally sit. The Conference instead adopted a resolution urging ratification. For your committee, that gap is an opportunity rather than a defect: the guidance layer on how states should implement these obligations for women workers specifically has not yet been written, and a Commission that produces well-drafted, specific recommendations on that point is doing work nobody else has done.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS AND APPROACHES

What could this Commission actually recommend? Five named approaches. Each is a real position held by real delegations, and each has a cost.

- **Reclassification-First.** Recommend that states establish a rebuttable presumption of employment where the platform exercises direction and control, following the European model. *Strength:* it restores every existing protection at once, without needing to legislate each one separately. *Weakness:* it reaches only workers who fit the test, does nothing for genuinely independent workers, and in high-informality economies it converts a small share of the workforce while leaving the rest untouched.
- **Third-Category.** Recommend a defined intermediate status carrying a specified package: an earnings floor, safety obligations, harassment redress, and a right to reasons before deactivation, without full employee status. *Strength:* it is politically achievable, and it can be designed to preserve genuine schedule flexibility. *Weakness:* it can become a ceiling rather than a floor, and unions argue with evidence that once a lower tier exists, employers restructure toward it.
- **Portable-Benefits.** Recommend detaching entitlements from any single relationship and attaching them to the worker, funded by per-transaction contributions from all platforms she works through, administered publicly. *Strength:* it fits multi-platform and intermittent work, which is how most women in this sector actually work, and it functions regardless of classification. *Weakness:* it requires administrative capacity many states lack, and it can let platforms buy their way out of every other obligation by paying a levy.
- **Algorithmic-Accountability-First.** Recommend rules on automated decisions affecting work allocation, ratings and account status: human review, a statement of reasons, a right to contest, and restrictions on processing sensitive data. *Strength:* it directly answers the no hearing problem, it applies to every worker regardless of classification, and there is now a legislative model to point to. *Weakness:* it addresses process rather than income, and a well-reasoned deactivation is still a deactivation.
- **Ratification-First.** Recommend that states ratify and implement the 2026 Convention, together with Conventions No. 183 and No. 190, and report on implementation for women workers specifically. *Strength:* it is squarely within what this Commission does well, it is unambiguously legitimate, and it converts an adopted standard into binding national obligations. *Weakness:* ratification is slow, it is a matter for capitals rather than for this room, and a text that only urges ratification can be criticized as adding nothing.

Pro Tip: The most effective drafts in this committee usually combine one structural approach with one measure that works immediately regardless of classification. Algorithmic-Accountability-First is the most common pairing partner, because it costs states very little, it does not require resolving the classification fight, and it produces something a delegate can name: a woman deactivated at two in the morning now has someone to write to and a right to an answer.

BUILDING EFFECTIVE ARGUMENTS

How do you actually speak in this room? You build a chain where each link earns the next, and you finish on something that can become a clause.

Consider this chain of reasoning:

1. Nearly all statutory maternity protection is conditioned on an employment relationship
2. Platform work is structured to avoid creating one
3. Women take platform work disproportionately because it accommodates care responsibilities
4. So the workers most likely to need maternity protection are concentrated in the category least likely to have it
5. That outcome follows from a neutral classification rule, but its burden falls almost entirely on one sex
6. Therefore this is not merely a gap in coverage; it is indirect discrimination of the kind article 11 of CEDAW addresses, and it is arguable as a treaty compliance question rather than only as a policy preference

That argument ends in a clause somebody has to vote on. Saying that platform workers deserve better protection ends in agreement and nothing else.

Here is a second chain, for delegates working the due process point:

1. Deactivation ends a worker's income as completely as dismissal does
2. Dismissal triggers notice, reasons and a right to respond in most legal systems
3. Deactivation triggers none of these, because no employment relationship is deemed to exist
4. Where the decision is automated, there may be no human decision-maker at all
5. So the worker's loss is identical while her procedural position is not
6. Therefore a right to reasons and to human review is not a labor law question that has to wait for classification; it is an access to justice question, and this Commission addressed access to justice as its priority theme in March 2026

Three habits that make a speech land.

- **Name the sector, not the sector in general.** Not “platform workers face harassment” but “a beauty services worker entering a client’s home alone has no employer with a safety duty and no workplace with a complaints procedure.” The specific version cannot be waved away.
- **Distinguish what the Convention settled from what it did not.** Delegates who say the ILO has now solved this will be corrected. Delegates who say the Convention

establishes obligations on dispute resolution and harassment while leaving classification to national law are describing it accurately, and that accuracy buys them authority.

- **Concede flexibility honestly.** Say plainly that flexibility is a real benefit and that many women choose this work for that reason. Then argue that flexibility and protection have been presented as a package deal by parties who benefit from that framing, and that the burden is on them to show why the two cannot be separated. This is a much stronger position than pretending the benefit does not exist.

Seed these terms and use them precisely: employment misclassification, algorithmic management, portable social protection, indirect discrimination, the sectoral term the ILO uses for this workforce, and dependent self-employment, which is the phrase labor economists use for workers who are formally independent but economically reliant on a single client.

ADDRESSING COUNTER-ARGUMENTS

What happens when someone attacks your position? These five objections are the ones you will actually face, and each is stronger than it first sounds.

Counter: “Flexibility is exactly what these women chose. Reclassify them and you will take away the only work that fits around their caring responsibilities.”

The most powerful objection in this committee, and it is supported by what women themselves report in surveys. You might respond by proposing:

- Separating schedule autonomy from legal status, since nothing in employment law requires fixed hours and several jurisdictions maintain both
- Focusing your text on protections that do not touch scheduling at all, such as harassment redress, safety duties and a right to reasons before deactivation
- Pointing out that the flexibility is asymmetric, because the worker may decline a job while the platform may adjust allocation, pricing and account status unilaterally

Counter: “A third category is a trap. Every time a lower tier of protection is created, employers restructure into it, and the standard employment relationship erodes for everyone.”

The union position, and there is real historical evidence for it. You might respond by proposing:

- Drafting any intermediate category with an explicit non-regression clause, so that it operates as a floor beneath existing rights rather than an alternative to them
- Recommending sunset and review provisions so that a category adopted now is reassessed against evidence
- Accepting the risk openly and arguing that in high-informality economies the realistic comparison is not with standard employment but with no protection at all

Counter: “We are a marketplace, not an employer. We do not set hours, we do not supervise, and we cannot be held responsible for what a client does in his own home.”

The platform position, and the marketplace characterization is not absurd for some business models. You might respond by proposing:

- Testing control by function rather than by label: who sets the price, who allocates the work, who decides account status, and who holds the ratings data
- Noting that intermediaries carry duties in many other regulated fields without becoming employers, from financial services to recruitment agencies
- Directing your obligations at the state, requiring it to ensure a remedy exists, rather than asserting a legal characterization this Commission has no power to make

Counter: “Mandating protection in a low-income economy will simply move this work back into cash and off the record, where there is no protection at all.”

The substitution argument, and it deserves a serious answer rather than dismissal. You might respond by proposing:

- Funding models that do not fall on a single employer, such as low per-transaction levies pooled across platforms, which are harder to avoid than a payroll obligation
- Phased and capacity-linked implementation, with technical assistance attached
- Pointing out that platform work is already digitally recorded, which makes it the easiest informal work to reach, and that this is an argument for acting here first rather than last

Counter: “This is a labor standards question. The ILO has just adopted a Convention on it. The Commission has no business drafting employment policy.”

A competence objection, and chairs take these seriously. You might respond by proposing:

- Framing your text around the gendered gaps a general standard does not close, which is precisely this Commission’s mandate
- Anchoring in CEDAW article 11 and in the Beijing Platform for Action rather than in labor law
- Urging ratification of the ILO instrument explicitly, which positions the Commission as reinforcing the ILO rather than duplicating it

QUESTIONS YOUR OUTCOME DOCUMENT MUST ANSWER

What has to be in the document? Agreed conclusions that leave any of these open will be picked apart during negotiation.

- **Which workers are covered?** All platform workers, only location-based workers, or only those in a defined dependency relationship. Say it explicitly, because everything else follows from the scope clause.
- **Does the text take a position on classification, or deliberately avoid one?** Both are legitimate choices and both have costs. What is not legitimate is leaving it ambiguous and hoping nobody notices.
- **What is the maternity mechanism?** Employer-funded leave, a contributory scheme open to the self-employed, a tax-funded universal benefit, or a levy-funded board. Each implies a different payer, and the payer is the whole negotiation.
- **What does a harassment remedy actually look like** when the harasser is a client and there is no workplace? Platform-level complaints handling, a statutory external mechanism, criminal referral, or a duty to preserve evidence and cooperate.
- **What is required before deactivation?** Notice, reasons, human review, a right to respond, or an external appeal. Say which, and say within what period.
- **Who pays, and how is it collected?** Per-transaction levy, aggregator contribution, general revenue, or worker contribution. If your text is silent on funding, it is a wish rather than a recommendation.
- **How does this interact with the 2026 Convention?** Urging ratification, supplementing it with gender-specific guidance, or both.
- **How is progress measured?** Sex-disaggregated data on platform work is thin almost everywhere. A reporting or data collection clause is unglamorous and it is often the most consequential thing in the document.

Modelling a Clause

A preambular paragraph:

“Recalling article 11 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and welcoming the adoption by the International Labour Conference on 12 June 2026 of the Convention concerning decent work in the platform economy,”

Consider what each part achieves. Opening with CEDAW article 11 grounds the text in a treaty that 189 states have ratified, which forecloses the argument that this Commission is inventing a new obligation. Welcoming the ILO Convention by name and date does three things at once: it demonstrates the Commission is current, it positions this text as complementary rather than competing, which answers the competence objection before it is made, and it creates the hook

for a later operative paragraph urging ratification. Nothing in the paragraph is contentious, and it has already won two arguments.

An operative paragraph:

“Urges Governments to ensure that workers engaged through digital labor platforms, irrespective of their contractual classification, have access to an effective remedy in respect of decisions restricting, suspending or terminating their access to work, including a statement of the reasons for the decision, review by a human decision-maker, and an opportunity to respond;”

Take it apart. “Urges Governments” uses the register this Commission actually operates in, and addresses the only actor it can address. “Irrespective of their contractual classification” is the load-bearing phrase: it delivers the protection without requiring the classification fight to be won first, and it borrows a formulation already accepted internationally in the Violence and Harassment Convention. Naming the three decisions, meaning restriction, suspension and termination, prevents a state from complying only in the case of permanent removal. The three procedural elements are specific enough to be verifiable and modest enough that a state can implement them without restructuring its labor law.

Now the weak version: “Urges Governments to promote fairness and transparency for workers in the digital economy.” Every delegation can accept it, no woman’s situation changes, and next year’s session opens exactly where this one did. If your paragraph could be adopted without anyone reading it, it is not doing anything.

RESEARCH AND PREPARATION GUIDELINES

Where do you look? The primary sources on this agenda are unusually accessible, and the secondary commentary is unusually unreliable, so the payoff from going to the original documents is larger here than in most committees.

Start with the instruments. CEDAW article 11 is four paragraphs long. ILO Convention No. 190 is short and its definitional articles are the most useful text in the whole framework. The reports of the ILO Standard-Setting Committee on Decent Work in the Platform Economy from the 113th and 114th sessions of the International Labour Conference set out the negotiation in detail, including where governments and employers disagreed, which tells you exactly which arguments have real weight behind them.

Then find your country's own position. Three questions, all answerable from public sources. Has your state ratified Conventions No. 183 and No. 190? Does your state maintain a reservation to CEDAW article 11, and if so, what does it say? What did your state say in the ILO committee discussions, which are minuted? A delegate who can quote their own government's stated position in the negotiation is operating at a level most of the room is not.

Then the data layer. UN Women's reports and the Commission's official documentation for its seventieth session, particularly the Secretary-General's report on access to justice, issued as document E/CN.6/2026/3. ILO research on digital labor platforms. Work by organizations focused on informal and home-based women's workers, which is where the gendered data actually lives. Fairwork's country scorecards rate platforms against defined standards and are useful for concrete, sourced claims about specific markets.

Read the platforms' own material. Terms of service, community guidelines and the deactivation and appeals policies are public. They tell you precisely what process a worker currently gets, which is far more persuasive in a speech than a general assertion that there is no process.

What to avoid.

- **Consultancy market-size reports** used as evidence about working conditions. They measure transaction volume, not the number of workers or their circumstances.
- **A single headline percentage for women's share of platform work.** It is meaningless without the sector and the country, and someone in the room will ask.
- **Descriptions of national law drawn from news coverage** rather than the statute. Several widely repeated claims about Indian and European law are wrong in ways that a delegate from those jurisdictions will catch immediately.

POSITION PAPER FRAMEWORK

How do you write the paper? One page, three parts, and no opening paragraph about the importance of gender equality.

Paragraph one, your country's situation. Is your state primarily a market for platform work, a host of platform companies, or both? What is the female labor force participation rate, and what share of women's employment is informal? Name one actual piece of domestic law or policy: a social security code, a state welfare board statute, a court judgment on worker status, a maternity benefit scheme and whether it covers the self-employed. One verifiable specific is worth three paragraphs of general commitment.

Paragraph two, your legal position. Ratification status for CEDAW and any reservation, and for ILO Conventions No. 183, No. 189, No. 190 and now No. 193. If your state has not ratified something, say so and give your government's reason. Delegates who conceal non-ratification get caught, and the concealment costs more credibility than the position ever would have.

Paragraph three, what you propose. Two or three measures, each with an addressee and a mechanism, written as language that could survive into the agreed conclusions. Not "strengthen protections for women workers" but "extend maternity cash benefit eligibility to registered platform workers through a per-transaction aggregator levy, administered by an existing social security authority."

End with one sentence on where you can compromise. In a committee whose output is negotiated line by line, the delegates who signal flexibility early are the ones invited into the drafting group, and the drafting group is where the document is actually written.

SIMULATION AND CRISIS SCENARIOS

What might get thrown at you mid-session? The Executive Board may introduce developments during committee. These are illustrative categories rather than predictions.

- **A platform announces a voluntary package.** A major platform introduces a maternity stipend, an appeals process and a safety feature, in the markets where regulation is pending, and announces it during your session. This splits the room. Some delegations will treat it as evidence that regulation works. Others will treat it as evidence that regulation is unnecessary. Your text has to decide whether voluntary measures count toward compliance, and if so, on what conditions.
- **A safety incident becomes public.** A worker is assaulted during a booking and the platform's response is limited to refunding the customer. The pressure will be to write something urgent and specific. The risk is that you draft a clause about one sector that does not generalize. Watch for that.
- **A transposition falls short.** As the European deadline of 2 December 2026 approaches, a member state's draft transposing law is reported to include a presumption so heavily qualified that it will rarely apply. This tests whether your text asks for a presumption or for an outcome, and outcome-based drafting is harder to evade.
- **A state announces a registration scheme with no benefits attached.** Registration is real, funded and operational; the benefits are deferred to a later notification. This is the most common real-world pattern, and it forces the committee to decide whether registration counts as progress or as a substitute for it.

Pro Tip: When an update lands, do not abandon your framework and start again. The delegations that come out ahead are the ones who can show that the mechanism they already proposed would have covered this. Build your draft around a process rather than around a single sector, and you will be able to make that argument.

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND FURTHER READING

What should you cite? These sources will hold up when a chair asks where you got it.

Core instruments:

- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, article 11
- CEDAW Committee general recommendations No. 16 on unpaid women workers and No. 26 on women migrant workers
- ILO Convention No. 193, Decent Work in the Platform Economy Convention, 2026
- ILO Convention No. 183 on Maternity Protection, 2000
- ILO Convention No. 190 on Violence and Harassment, 2019
- ILO Convention No. 189 on Domestic Workers, 2011
- ILO Recommendation No. 204 on the transition from the informal to the formal economy, 2015
- Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 1995, strategic objectives on women and the economy
- ECOSOC resolution 11(II) of 21 June 1946, establishing the Commission

Commission documents:

- Report of the Secretary-General on access to justice for all women and girls, E/CN.6/2026/3
- Agreed conclusions of the seventieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, 2026

Negotiation and national material:

- ILO, reports of the Standard-Setting Committee on Decent Work in the Platform Economy, 113th and 114th sessions of the International Labour Conference
- Directive (EU) 2024/2831 on improving working conditions in platform work
- Code on Social Security, 2020 (India), definitions of gig worker and platform worker
- Rajasthan Platform Based Gig Workers (Registration and Welfare) Act, 2023
- Uber BV v Aslam [2021] UKSC 5, United Kingdom Supreme Court

Research and monitoring:

- ILO research on digital labor platforms and working conditions
- UN Women reports on women's economic empowerment and social protection
- Fairwork country scorecards on platform working conditions
- Research published by organizations working on informal and home-based women workers

FINAL NOTE FOR DELEGATES

Two habits will distinguish a strong delegate in this committee.

The first is refusing the false choice. You will hear, repeatedly and from serious people, that flexibility and protection cannot coexist and that women must pick one. Nothing in labor law makes that true. Fixed hours are not a condition of employee status in any major legal system, and portable benefits function precisely because they do not require a continuous relationship. The delegate who insists on separating the two questions, and who asks each speaker to show why their preferred protection would necessarily reduce a woman's control over her own schedule, will reframe the entire debate. Most of the time, no such showing can be made.

The second is remembering who is actually in this sector. Public debate about platform work is overwhelmingly about delivery riders and drivers, and in most countries those workers are overwhelmingly male. The women are in home services, beauty, care and online microwork, and they are less visible, less organized and less studied. A resolution built entirely around the visible sector will not reach them. If you can be the delegate who keeps asking whether a proposed measure would change anything for a woman cleaning a stranger's apartment or annotating images at midnight, you will improve every draft in the room, including the ones you did not write.

That is the whole job. Do it well.

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