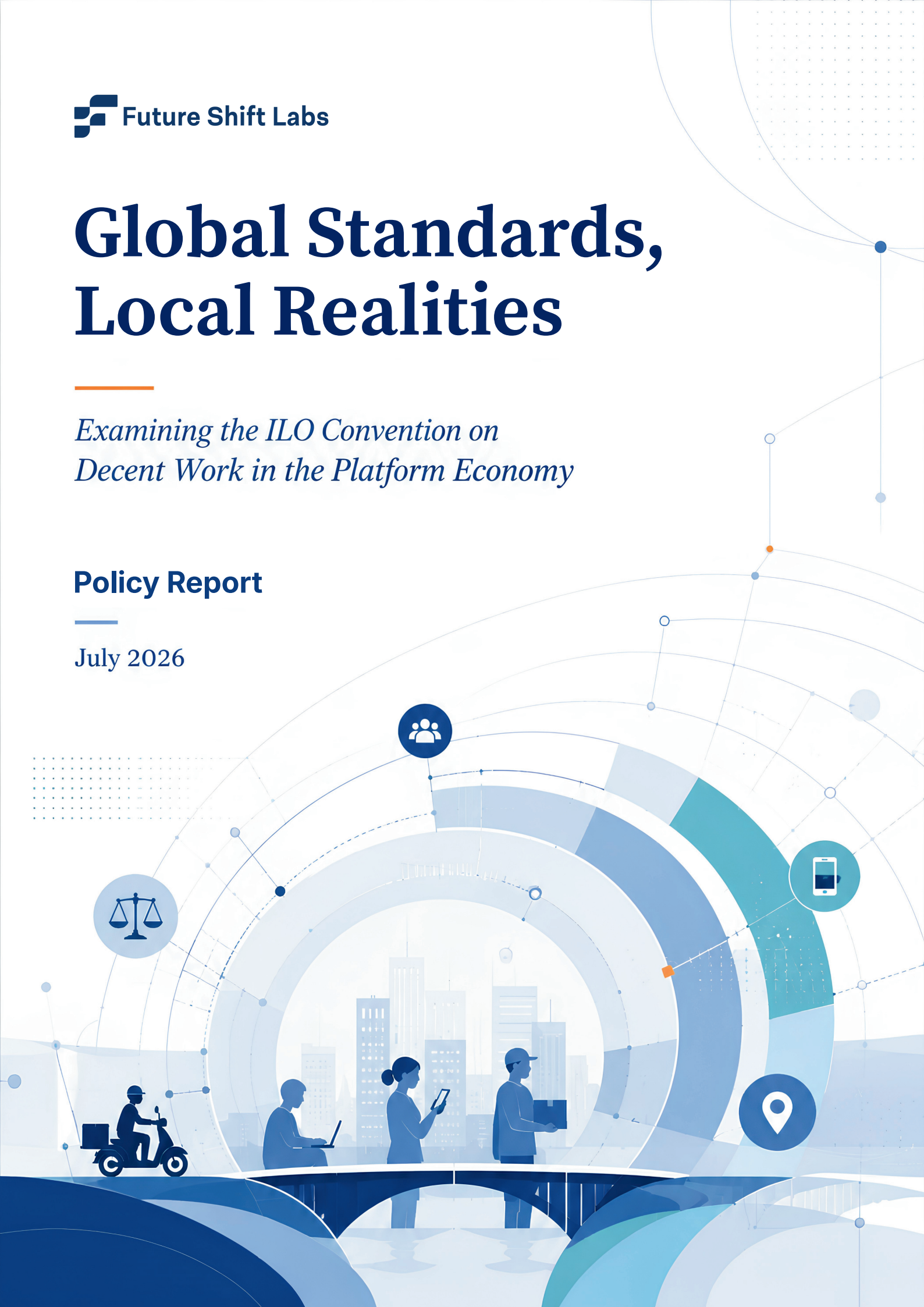


Global Standards, Local Realities

*Examining the ILO Convention on
Decent Work in the Platform Economy*

Policy Report

July 2026



Global Standards, Local Realities

Examining the ILO Convention on Decent Work in the Platform Economy

Author

Prachi Sharma, Research Manager, FSL

About Future Shift Labs

Future Shift Labs (FSL) is a strategic research and policy think tank working to build a sustainable, equitable, and digitally resilient future by advancing responsible and ethical applications of artificial intelligence. Established in 2024, the organisation conducts in-depth research and analysis on emerging AI technologies and their societal impact, advocates for inclusive AI governance, and supports strategic consulting, training, and public engagement to strengthen institutional and community capacity. With a focus on fostering collaboration among researchers, policymakers, industry leaders, and civil society, Future Shift Labs seeks to position India as a global leader in digital diplomacy, ethical AI development, and international cooperation on emerging technology challenges.

Suggested Citation:

Sharma, P. (2026). *Global Standards, Local Realities: Examining the ILO Convention on Decent Work in the Platform Economy*. Future Shift Labs.

Report Design:

Abir Mahanta, Multimedia Designer, FSL

Publication Year: 2026



For publication enquiries, please contact: contact@futureshiftlabs.com

© 2026 *Future Shift Labs*.

This publication may be reproduced for non-commercial research, educational, or policy purposes with appropriate acknowledgement of the source.

Acknowledgements

This report has benefited immensely from the generosity, expertise, and time of numerous individuals who contributed through consultations during its preparation. I am deeply grateful to each of them for sharing their knowledge, critical reflections, and experiences on platform work, labour regulation, digital technologies, and public policy. Their insights significantly enriched this report, challenged assumptions, and helped ground its analysis in both research and practice.

While this report draws substantially on these discussions, all analysis, interpretations, arguments, and any errors or omissions remain solely the author's own and should not be attributed to any of the individuals acknowledged below or their respective institutions.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to:

- **Dr Aditya Ray**, Senior Lecturer, University of the West of England Bristol
- **Dr Anjana Karumathil**, Professor of Practice, IIM Kozhikode
- **Avanti Deshpande**, Lawyer and Policy Researcher
- **Ayushi Roy**, Urban Researcher
- **Damni Kain**, Doctoral Researcher, University of Cambridge
- **Dr Tanya Rabban**, Assistant Professor, Amity University Mohali
- **Vageesh Vishnoi**, Doctoral Researcher, Indian Institute of Technology Delhi

Their willingness to engage thoughtfully with the ideas presented in this report, offer constructive criticism, and reflect on emerging questions in platform work governance has been invaluable.

I would like to acknowledge the broader community of workers, trade unions, researchers, civil society organisations, and policymakers whose work over the past decade has advanced understanding of platform labour and informed the global conversations culminating in the adoption of the ILO Convention on Decent Work in the Platform Economy. This report builds upon that collective body of scholarship, advocacy, and practice.

Finally, I thank **Sagar Vishnoi**, Director and Co-Founder, Future Shift Labs, and **Vidhi Sharma**, Head of Responsible AI, Future Shift Labs, for their critical feedback and support throughout the preparation of this report.

Prachi Sharma

Research Manager, Future Shift Labs

Executive Summary

The adoption of the ILO Convention on **Decent Work in the Platform Economy** (No. 193) at the **114th International Labour Conference** in June 2026 marks the first global labour standard dedicated to platform work. While the Convention establishes an important foundation for extending labour protections to platform workers worldwide, its final text also reflects the compromises inherent in multilateral standard-setting, such as the omission of the accompanying non-binding Recommendation, which would have provided detailed implementation guidance.

This report examines Convention No. 193 from the perspective of India, one of the world's largest platform labour markets, including its negotiating position and eventual abstention from the Convention's adoption. Drawing on textual analysis of the negotiations at the 113th and 114th International Labour Conferences, complemented by consultations with researchers, legal scholars, and policy experts, the report examines how far global standard-setting aligns with the realities of platform work in India.

The report argues that platform work encompasses highly heterogeneous sectors, workers, and labour arrangements, requiring more differentiated and context-sensitive approaches to regulatory implementation.

Many of the challenges associated with platform work, including questions of control, accountability, and worker protection, cannot be understood through the human-versus-algorithm binary alone. Instead, they reflect deeper structural characteristics of labour markets that predate digital platforms. Acknowledging the ways in which platforms produce both opportunity and precarity, the report calls for policymaking approaches that are capable of holding these contradictions together.

The report concludes that Convention No. 193 should be understood not as the endpoint of platform work regulation, but as an important starting point. Its greatest contribution lies in establishing a global baseline from which countries can develop context-specific regulatory frameworks responsive to their own labour markets while upholding common minimum labour standards.

As governments begin considering ratification and implementation, these findings offer a framework for translating international labour standards into context-sensitive national and state policy. Accordingly, the report concludes with a set of stakeholder-specific **recommendations** for the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Government of India, State Governments, researchers and platform companies. (see p. 33)

Contents

Acknowledgements	03
Executive Summary	04
1. Introduction	06 - 09
1.1 Structure of the Report	07 - 08
1.2 Methodology	08 - 09
2. The Convention and the 114th Session	10 - 24
2.1 Reception of the Convention	12 - 13
2.2 Omission of Draft Recommendation	13 - 14
2.3 Automated Systems, Personal Data, and Privacy	15 - 16
2.4 Classification of Status of Employment	16 - 17
2.5 Formalization of Work through the Platform Economy	18 - 19
2.6 The Politics of Compromise	20
2.7 India and the Global South	21 - 23
2.8 The Way Forward	24
3. Current Challenges in the Platform Work Discourse	25 - 31
3.1 The Heterogeneity of Platform Work	26 - 27
3.2 Ground Realities: Holding Contradictions Together	27 - 28
3.3 Algorithms and the Future of Platform Work	29
3.4 Governance Beyond the Human/Technology Binary	30 - 31
4. Conclusion and Recommendations	32 - 36
Appendix A: Blue Report vs Final Convention	37 - 40
Appendix B: A Brief Timeline of ILO Negotiations on Platform Work	41
Appendix C: Brief Descriptions of Consultations with Experts	42 - 43
Appendix D: Country Statements Referenced in the Report	44 - 45
About the Author	46





Introduction

I. Introduction

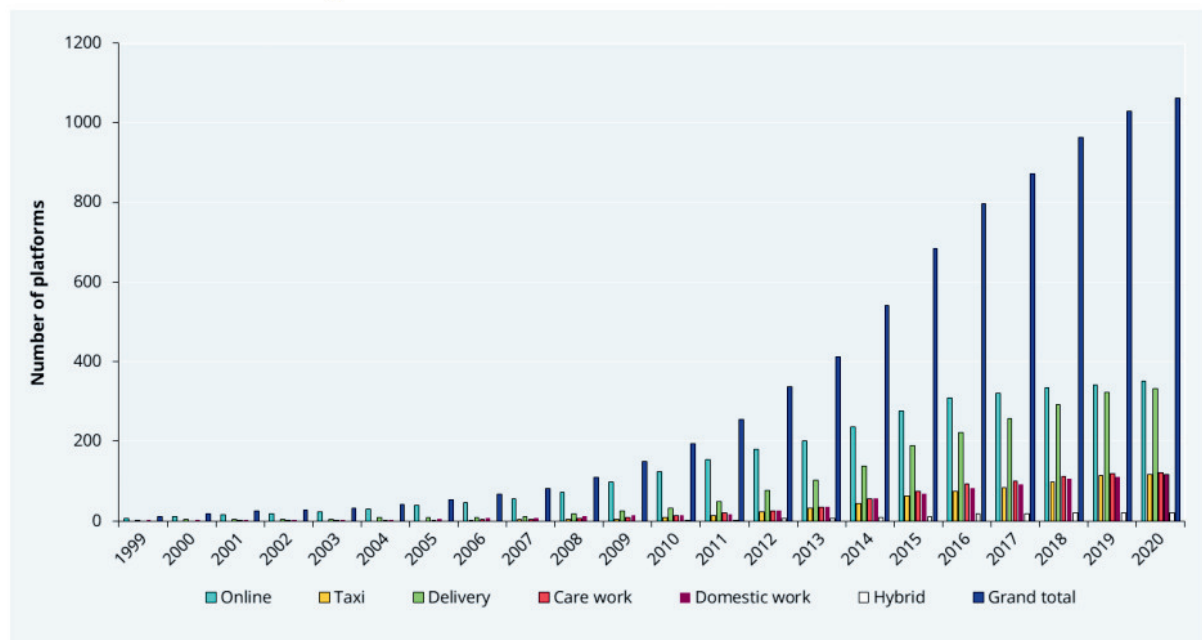
On 12 June 2026, the **International Labour Organization** adopted the first international **Convention on Decent Work in the Platform Economy**, marking the culmination of nearly a decade of advocacy by workers' organizations and two years of intensive standard-setting negotiations.¹ Yet the moment was accompanied by an unlikely development: India abstained from the final vote, alongside Bangladesh, among 26 Member States.²

The abstention raises an important question.

Why would countries with some of the world's largest and fastest-growing platform workforces consisting of vulnerable populations hesitate to support the first global labour standard for platform work?

For those who have been following the negotiations, this should not come as a surprise as countries like India and Bangladesh repeatedly furthered a 'balanced' response,³ posing risks of higher regulatory costs and implications of non-compliance on low resource countries.

Figure 1. Number of active platforms connecting businesses and clients to workers globally, selected categories



Source: ILO Law and Practice Report (V1) / ILC.113, Report V(1), [Link](#)

1. See *Appendix B* for a detailed timeline of the ILO negotiations.

2. See [Results of the vote on the adoption of the Decent Work in the Platform Economy Convention](#), International Labour Organization, 2026.

3. See pg 5, 14 in [Part I](#) of Future Shift Labs' two-part analysis series on the ILO Convention No. 193.

Rather than documenting the conditions of platform workers—which have already been extensively examined through investigative journalism,⁴ policy reports,⁵ ethnographic research,⁶ and worker-led advocacy—this report asks *how well do the regulatory assumptions embedded within the newly adopted ILO Convention correspond with the realities of platform work in India?*

Drawing on consultations with researchers, legal scholars, policy experts, and practitioners working directly with platform workers, the report places the Convention in conversation with the realities emerging from Indian research and practice.

Accordingly, this report makes three contributions.

-  **First**, it analyses the principal changes introduced during the 114th International Labour Conference and their implications for the adopted Convention.
-  **Second**, it examines how the Convention's regulatory approach aligns or diverges from concerns emerging from research and practice on platform work in India.
-  **Finally**, it proposes a series of recommendations intended to inform future implementation of platform work standards in India and beyond.

1.1 Structure of the Report

The report is organised into two broad sections. **Section 2** examines the outcome of the 114th ILC and analyses the final Convention, focusing on the principal changes introduced during the negotiations, including the omission of the accompanying Recommendation, revisions relating to automated systems and personal data, employment classification, and the emerging emphasis on formalisation. It also considers the compromises that shaped the final instrument, India's position during the negotiations, and the implications for implementation going forward. Building on this analysis, **Section 3** moves beyond the Convention itself to examine broader conceptual challenges in contemporary platform work discourse.

Drawing on consultations with experts, it reflects on the heterogeneity of platform work, competing narratives around algorithms and work, the limitations of framing platform work primarily as a technology governance issue, and the need to hold multiple realities and contradictions together when designing policy. The report concludes by synthesising these insights into **recommendations** for policymakers, researchers, civil society, and other stakeholders engaged in shaping the future of platform work.

4. For example, see *Rest of World*, ([Link 1](#)), ([Link 2](#)), and *The Indian Express*, ([Link 1](#)), ([Link 2](#))

5. For example, see Kumar, A. and Narayanan, V., *The Algorithmic-Human Manager: AI, Apps, and Workers in the Indian Gig Economy*. CeRAI, IIT Madras, 2025, and *Unlocking the Future: How to Enable 23.5 Million Indian Youth to Use Gig Work as a Stepping Stone*. Primus Partners, New Delhi, 2026

6. See Mary L. Gray and Siddharth Suri, *Ghost Work: How to Stop Silicon Valley from Building a New Global Underclass*, 2019.

1.2 Methodology

This report combines textual analysis of the negotiations at the 113th and 114th International Labour Conferences with a series of expert consultations conducted between June and July 2026. Consultations were undertaken with academics, labour researchers, legal scholars, and policy practitioners working on platform work, labour regulation, and technology governance in India. These consultations were used to test emerging interpretations of the negotiations, identify implementation challenges, and surface issues receiving comparatively limited attention within the formal standard-setting process.



The Convention and the 114th Session

2. The Convention and the 114th Session

The 114th International Labour Conference concluded with the adoption of the Convention on Decent Work in the Platform Economy, 2026, the first binding international labour standard specifically addressing work mediated through digital labour platforms.

The final text⁷ differs in important respects from the earlier draft⁸ discussed during the first phase of negotiations and revised thereafter. The Convention retains a binding principles-based framework covering issues including occupational safety and health, employment classification, remuneration, social security, algorithmic management, data protection, and dispute resolution, while many of the more detailed provisions originally proposed for the accompanying Recommendation were removed.

The **Worker Vice-Chair Amanda Brown** described the Convention as rejecting the notion that platform workers can perform the work of employees while being denied corresponding labour protections, reaffirming that platform work is work deserving rights.⁹

The Convention addresses a broad range of issues, including:

-  Fundamental principles and rights at work
-  Occupational safety and health
-  Violence and harassment
-  Promotion of decent work opportunities
-  Remuneration or payment
-  Impact of the use of automated systems based on algorithms on workers
-  Social security
-  Data protection and privacy
-  Suspension, deactivation and termination
-  Protection of migrants and refugees
-  Access to justice

7. ILC.114/Record 5A, [Outcome of the Standard-Setting Committee on Decent Work in Platform Economy: Texts submitted to the Conference for adoption](#), International Labour Organization, 11 June 2026.

8. Report V(4) (Blue Report): [Realizing decent work in the platform economy: Summary of the observations received and Draft Convention and Recommendation](#), International Labour Organization, 2 March 2026.

9. [Worker Vice-Chair statement on the Platform Economy Convention](#), Plenary debates, Morning sitting, International Labour Organization, 10 June 2026.

2.1. Reception of the Convention

The Convention has been widely welcomed by trade unions and labour organisations as a landmark achievement. The **International Trade Union Confederation** (ITUC) described it as “a major step towards ensuring that millions of platform workers enjoy the rights, protections and dignity that every worker deserves,” while calling on governments to move swiftly towards ratification and implementation.¹⁰ Similarly, **Public Services International** (PSI) characterised the Convention as the first binding international labour standard for the platform economy and highlighted its recognition of core labour rights, occupational safety and health, social protection, and algorithmic management.¹¹ At the same time, PSI noted that the final instrument reflects significant compromises reached during negotiations and is weaker than many worker organisations had originally advocated.

Shaik Salauddin, Founder President of the **Telangana Gig and Platform Workers Union** and National General Secretary of the **Indian Federation of App-Based Transport Workers**,¹² described the Convention as the culmination of years of organising, advocacy, and research, arguing that it establishes global recognition that platform workers are workers entitled to labour rights, dignity, and social protection.

Beyond trade unions, early commentary from researchers and civil society has similarly recognised the Convention as an important milestone while emphasising that its ultimate significance will depend on national implementation. As **Bot Populi (IT for Change)** notes, the Convention establishes, for the first time, that platform-mediated work falls within the ILO’s framework of fundamental principles and rights at work.¹³ However, its practical impact will ultimately depend on how governments translate these international standards into domestic law and policy, and how workers, unions, and civil society continue to shape interpretation and implementation through future political and legal contestation.

Similarly, consultations conducted for this report with academics, labour researchers, civil society practitioners, legal scholars, and policy experts revealed broad agreement that the Convention represents a significant and timely milestone in the governance of platform work. Several respondents emphasised that international standard-setting by the ILO carries importance beyond its immediate legal effect, creating normative precedents that are likely to influence future national legislation, judicial interpretation, and policy debates even in countries that do not immediately ratify the Convention. Many viewed the Convention as an important *first step* towards establishing a global baseline for labour standards in the platform economy, particularly given the rapid expansion and transnational nature of digital labour platforms.

At the same time, respondents pointed to the diversity of platform work across sectors and business models, and the considerable discretion left to Member States, which may result in uneven enforcement across jurisdictions. As several experts argued, given the nature of multilateral standard-setting, this was inevitable.

10. [International Labour Conference 2026: Historic new protections for platform workers and stronger commitments to gender equality at work](#), International Trade Union Confederation, 2026.

11. [Unions secure New ILO Convention on Decent Work in the Platform Economy](#), Public Services International, 15 June 2026.

12. [Shaik Salauddin’s comment on the ILO Platform Work Convention](#), June 2026.

13. Shobhit S., [Algorithmic Management in and beyond ILO Convention 193](#), Bot Populi, IT for Change, 30 June 2026.

Against this backdrop, the following sections examine the principal changes introduced during the 114th Session, comparing the *final Convention* with the draft text analysed in *Part I* of this two-part series and assessing the implications of these changes for platform work governance.

2.2 Omission of Draft Recommendation

Perhaps the single most significant outcome of the 114th Session was not an amendment to the Convention itself, but the complete omission of the accompanying Recommendation.¹⁴ As a result, the ILO adopted only the Convention, while the Recommendation—originally intended to provide detailed guidance on implementation—was deferred after delegates were unable to complete negotiations within the available time.

This outcome is particularly significant in light of the debates that shaped the standard-setting process during the 113th Session in 2025 and the written comments subsequently submitted by Member States. Throughout these discussions, the **nature of the instrument** itself emerged as one of the principal areas of contestation. Worker representatives consistently advocated for stronger and more detailed binding obligations, while many governments emphasised the need for flexibility given the diversity of national labour markets, regulatory systems, and platform business models. Employer representatives similarly cautioned against overly prescriptive regulation, arguing that it could constrain innovation and the continued growth of the platform economy.

The compromise that gradually emerged during negotiations was to retain a relatively **principles-based Convention** while relocating many of the more detailed operational provisions into the accompanying **non-binding Recommendation**, allowing Member States greater flexibility in domestic application.

As the negotiations progressed between the 113th and 114th Sessions, numerous provisions were deliberately transferred from the draft Convention into the draft Recommendation. For example:

-  Within the provisions on **remuneration or payment and working time**, detailed provisions relating to deductions, fees, commissions, payment transparency, compensation for waiting time and maximum hours of work or minimum rest periods were shifted into the Recommendation while broader principles remained in the Convention.¹⁵
-  Similarly, in the provisions governing **automated systems**, specific safeguards including provisions addressing discrimination, psychosocial risks, **prohibited categories of personal data processing**, and other operational requirements were moved into the Recommendation.¹⁶

14. See pg 111-114 for Recommendation, Report V(4) (Blue Report): [Realizing decent work in the platform economy: Summary of the observations received and Draft Convention and Recommendation](#), 2 March 2026.

15. See the table for 'Remuneration/Payment' on pg 10-12 in Part I of the two-part analysis series ([Link](#)).

16. See the table for 'Algorithmic Management and Automated Systems' on pg 12-13 in [Part I](#) of Future Shift Labs' two-part analysis series on the ILO Convention No. 193.

- Detailed provisions on **freedom of association and social dialogue** such as creating an enabling environment for the right to bargain collectively and meaningful negotiations were shifted to the Recommendation.¹⁷
- Likewise, detailed **occupational safety and health** provisions concerning long working hours, inadequate rest periods, training, protective equipment, and other preventive measures were also relocated to the Recommendation.¹⁸

The failure to adopt the Recommendation therefore has consequences that extend beyond the loss of a supplementary instrument. It effectively removes much of the practical guidance that was intended to accompany the Convention, leaving Member States with broad principles but considerably less direction regarding their implementation.

As **Valérie Berset Bircher, Rapporteur of the Standard-Setting Committee**, observed at the close of negotiations, the Committee simply “did not have the time” to negotiate the Recommendation.¹⁹ She noted that discussions had reflected the diversity of national conditions and ultimately resulted in a principles-based Convention that offers Member States the flexibility necessary for implementation while establishing an important pillar for platform workers.

Trade union organisations similarly viewed the absence of the Recommendation as one of the principal shortcomings of the final outcome. **Public Services International (PSI)** described its omission as a significant setback, arguing that the Recommendation was intended to provide the practical guidance necessary to give the Convention its full effect by elaborating how many of its protections should operate in practice.²⁰

Consequently, PSI has called on the ILO Governing Body to prioritise completion of the Recommendation at a future International Labour Conference and, given the rapidly evolving nature of platform work, to use the opportunity to further strengthen its provisions before eventual adoption.

Key takeaway: The omission of the Recommendation that was intended to accompany the principles-based Convention has left the instrument without detailed provisions or implementation guidance for member states. Although this omission enabled the committee to reach consensus within the stipulated timeframe, it has also shifted much of the responsibility for interpretation to member states, potentially weakening implementation or leading to uneven enforcement.

17. See Section 1 of the Draft Recommendation in the [Blue Report](#), March 2026.

18. See pg 16 in [Part I](#) of Future Shift Labs’ two-part analysis series on the ILO Convention No. 193.

19. [Rapporteur’s report: Standards Setting Committee on Decent Work in the Platform Economy](#), Closing of the 114th Session of the International Labour Conference, 12 June 2026.

20. [Unions secure New ILO Convention on Decent Work in the Platform Economy](#), *Public Services International*, 15 June 2026.

2.3 Automated Systems, Personal Data, and Privacy

The final Convention also introduces a number of important refinements to the provisions governing algorithmic management and data protection.

At the outset, the **preamble** itself reflects a notable shift in emphasis. The earlier draft specifically recognised decent work deficits arising from “the impact of the use of automated systems on the working conditions of digital platform workers or their access to work.” The final Convention removes this explicit reference, instead adopting the broader framing of “recognizing existing decent work deficits in the platform economy.”²¹ It reduces the visibility of algorithmic management as one of the defining challenges motivating the Convention.

More substantive changes appear in the provisions on automated decision-making. The **Blue Report** required Members to ensure that workers could request a written explanation for decisions affecting their working conditions or access to work, as well as human review of decisions involving non-payment, suspension, deactivation, or termination. The adopted text introduces several qualifications.

-  First, these must now be implemented “taking into account the classification of status in employment,” potentially creating fragmented protections across employment categories.²²
-  Second, workers are entitled only to explanations for “significant” decisions that “adversely” affect their working arrangements or access to work, narrowing the range of decisions subject to transparency obligations.²³
-  Finally, the earlier requirement for human review has been replaced with a broader obligation to provide a “review, as appropriate,” while a separate paragraph requires only that digital labour platforms ensure “appropriate human involvement.”²⁴

At the same time, the Convention strengthens certain aspects of personal data protection.

-  The final text requires that personal data be processed only for the legitimate purpose for which it was collected and not subsequently processed in ways incompatible with the **fundamental rights** established under the Convention.
-  It also introduces a new right enabling digital platform workers to request access to, rectification of, and erasure of their personal data, subject to applicable national data retention laws.²⁵

Key takeaway: While the final Convention strengthens personal data protection, it simultaneously dilutes protections against algorithmic management by making workers’ rights to explanations and human review of automated decisions subject to employment classification, leaving considerable discretion to Member States.

21. See *Appendix A*, point 2

22. See *Appendix A*, point 21

23. See *Appendix A*, point 19

24. See *Appendix A*, point 20 & 22

25. See *Appendix A*, point 24

2.4 Classification of Status of Employment

One of the central compromises emerging from the standard-setting process concerns the question of employment classification. Throughout the negotiations at the 113th ILC in 2025, considerable effort was devoted to **reaching consensus that the Convention would apply to all platform workers regardless of their employment status.**²⁶

Rather than attempting to define an employment relationship, a task complicated by widely differing national legal systems, the ILO adopted an approach centred on extending minimum decent work standards irrespective of classification. Instead, it requires Member States to take measures to ensure that status in employment is correctly determined. Factual reality, and not solely contractual clauses, will provide guidance for that purpose. This reflected an effort to avoid becoming entangled in longstanding legal disputes over whether platform workers should be treated as employees or independent contractors.

However, the final text reveals a more nuanced picture. Although the Convention continues to apply to all platform workers, the classification of status in employment now appears as a condition across several provisions, meaning that employment status continues to influence the scope and implementation of protections.

-  For example, Article 4 on **occupational safety and health** now requires Member States, when allocating responsibilities between public authorities, platforms and workers, to take into account “the classification of digital platform workers’ status in employment.”²⁷
-  Similarly, Article 9, which addresses **employment classification** itself, no longer refers only to the existence of an employment relationship, but to the “existence or non-existence” of such a relationship, recognising both possible legal outcomes.²⁸
-  References to employment status also appear in Article 15 governing **automated decision-making**, where access to explanations and review is to be provided “taking into account the classification of status in employment.”²⁹
-  Perhaps the clearest implications emerge in Article 10 on **remuneration**. The Convention requires that workers in an employment relationship receive remuneration no lower than the applicable minimum wage and be compensated for expenses incurred in carrying out their work. For workers outside an employment relationship, however, Member States are only asked to give consideration to extending minimum wage protections, while ‘compensation for work-related expenses’ is omitted altogether.³⁰

26. See [Part I](#) of Future Shift Labs’ two-part analysis series on the ILO Convention No. 193.

27. See [Appendix A](#), point 5.

28. See [Appendix A](#), point 9.

29. See [Appendix A](#), point 21.

30. See [Appendix A](#), points 11-15.

Although the Convention seeks to establish protections irrespective of employment status, the practical consequences attached to classification remain significant.

This tension emerged repeatedly during consultations conducted for this report. Several experts viewed the ILO's approach as a pragmatic attempt to extend immediate protections to millions of platform workers without waiting for often lengthy legal disputes over employment status to be resolved. At the same time, they cautioned that sidestepping the question of legal responsibility may ultimately leave unresolved the issue of who bears responsibility for guaranteeing labour rights. As one respondent observed, extending protections without resolving accountability risks addressing symptoms while leaving the underlying employment relationship contested.

Others argued that this approach reflects the realities of contemporary platform work, where many workers value flexibility and derive income from multiple platforms simultaneously. From this perspective, the objective should not necessarily be to convert all platform workers into traditional employees, but rather to ensure predictable earnings, social protection and basic labour standards regardless of contractual classification. At the same time, several respondents stressed that legal classification remains fundamental to labour law. One expert remarked, “the law never does charity. Every word matters. Until you define something, implementation becomes difficult.”³¹

The final Convention therefore occupies a middle ground between competing regulatory approaches. Unlike the EU Platform Work Directive,³² which seeks to address employment misclassification more directly through a rebuttable presumption of employment, the ILO framework deliberately avoids prescribing a single legal model while simultaneously allowing employment status to shape the application of key protections. Whether this balance succeeds in expanding protection without perpetuating legal ambiguity is likely to become one of the central questions as Member States move towards implementation.

Key takeaway: While the Convention deliberately avoids prescribing a single model of employment, the continued reliance on employment classification across key provisions means that legal status remains central to the scope and effectiveness of workers' protections.

31. See *Appendix C* for short notes on consultations with experts for this project.

32. This insight came up during a consultation. For more, see *Appendix C*.

2.5 Formalization of Work through the Platform Economy

One of the most notable additions to the final Convention is the entirely new Article 8, which requires Member States to “take appropriate measures to facilitate formalization of work via digital labour platforms, including registration of self-employed workers.”³³

Although brief, this provision raises one of the most fundamental questions: what exactly does ‘formalization’ mean in the context of platform work?

For decades, labour policy has generally understood formalization as a transition from the gig economy to more stable employment. The former is characterized by insecure, informal work and the latter by contracts, labour protections, and social security.

Much of the existing policy literature has viewed platform work as a transitional form of employment, with long-term efforts focused on creating pathways out of precarious gig work into more stable forms of work through education, skilling, and labour reforms.³⁴ Against this backdrop, Article 8 appears to suggest a different possibility that platform work itself may become a vehicle for formalization.

Yet the Convention offers little guidance on what such formalization would entail in practice.



Image Credits : live.ilo.org

31. See *Appendix C* for short notes on consultations with experts for this project.

32. This insight came up during a consultation. For more, see *Appendix C*.

33. See *Appendix A*, point 8.

34. For example, see Kumar, A. and Narayanan, V., *The Algorithmic-Human Manager: AI, Apps, and Workers in the Indian Gig Economy*. CeRAI, IIT Madras, 2025, and *Unlocking the Future: How to Enable 23.5 Million Indian Youth to Use Gig Work as a Stepping Stone*. Primus Partners, New Delhi, 2026

This question emerged repeatedly during consultations conducted for this report. Several respondents challenged the increasingly common assumption that digitalization leads to formalization.

- While digital platforms undoubtedly generate records of work, earnings, transactions and worker profiles, that alone does not translate into labour protection. As one respondent observed, the **visibility created through platforms primarily benefits governments and platforms rather than workers themselves**. Digital traceability is not equivalent to formal employment where contractual rights, accountability, and enforceable protections remain absent.
- Rather than relying on platforms to fill employment gaps, respondents argued that governments must remain attentive to **creating secure, quality employment beyond the platform economy**.
- Several consultations also highlighted the conceptual instability of the formal-informal distinction itself. Platform work often combines elements traditionally associated with both categories: digitally organised and highly visible forms of work may nevertheless remain insecure, unregulated, and devoid of social protection. One respondent described this as a form of **digitally organised informality**,³⁵ in which technology aggregates, documents and coordinates workers without fundamentally altering the precarious nature of their employment.

From this perspective, formalization should not be reduced to digital registration or inclusion within platform databases, but understood as a broader question of labour rights, security, bargaining power, and decent work.

In practice, Article 8 may ultimately require the International Labour Organization to clarify what formalization should mean within the platform economy before meaningful implementation can begin. Ultimately, it introduces a new objective without specifying the roadmap for achieving it. If formalization is to become one of the Convention's central ambitions, a critical question for policymakers, particularly in countries such as India, will be whether digital platforms can genuinely serve as pathways towards formal labour markets, or whether they instead produce new forms of digitally mediated informality.

Key takeaway: Article 8 introduces formalization as a new objective for platform work but leaves its meaning largely undefined. Formalization cannot be equated with digital registration alone; it must be grounded in enforceable labour rights, social protection, and decent work to avoid legitimizing new forms of digitally mediated informality.

35. For further reading on 'digitally organized informality', see Aditya Ray, [Coping with crisis and precarity in the gig economy: 'Digitally organised informality', migration and socio-spatial networks among platform drivers in India](#), 31 January 2024.

2.6 The Politics of Compromise

Like most ILO standards, the final Convention reflects a carefully negotiated compromise between governments, employers, and workers. Rather than representing a clear victory for any one group, the adopted text incorporates priorities advanced by each throughout the two-year standard-setting process.

Employers' Group

Throughout the negotiations, employers argued that regulation should remain proportionate, avoid constraining innovation, and preserve the diversity of business models and national labour market arrangements. As articulated during the Conference, **“restricting innovation will not reduce inequality; expanding access to opportunity will.”**³⁶ These priorities are visible in several aspects of the final text. The Convention avoids creating a presumption of employment, instead recognising both the existence and non-existence of an employment relationship and leaving classification to national legal systems. Similarly, the omission of the Recommendation leaves Member States with considerably greater flexibility in implementation than originally envisaged. The final Implementation article also introduces a new obligation requiring Member States to take **appropriate measures to protect commercially sensitive information of digital labour platforms**, a provision that directly reflects employer concerns regarding innovation, investment, and commercial confidentiality.³⁷

Workers' Group

At the same time, worker representatives secured consensus for a number of significant concerns. For the first time, an international labour standard specifically recognises platform work within the framework of decent work and extends the ILO's **Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work** to the platform economy. The Convention also establishes binding obligations relating to occupational safety and health, violence and harassment, algorithmic management, social security, dispute resolution, and employment classification. Throughout the negotiations, worker representatives consistently argued that reskilling and technological adaptation could not substitute for labour rights, insisting that **“without rights, fair wages and bargaining rights, [technology] will not deliver a just transition.”**³⁸

They repeatedly returned to one of the ILO's foundational principles—that *labour is not a commodity*—arguing that this principle has become even more relevant in an age increasingly shaped by algorithmic management and artificial intelligence.

Employer Vice-Chair Ewa Staworzynska acknowledged that “no group secured everything they sought, but every group got something.”³⁹

The Convention establishes the first binding international framework governing platform work while simultaneously preserving significant flexibility for national implementation. Whether this balance ultimately succeeds in improving conditions for platform workers without imposing unworkable regulatory burdens will depend on how Member States interpret, ratify, and implement its provisions.

36. [Employers' group statement on AI, decent work and ILO reform](#), Plenary Morning Sitting, 3 June 2026.

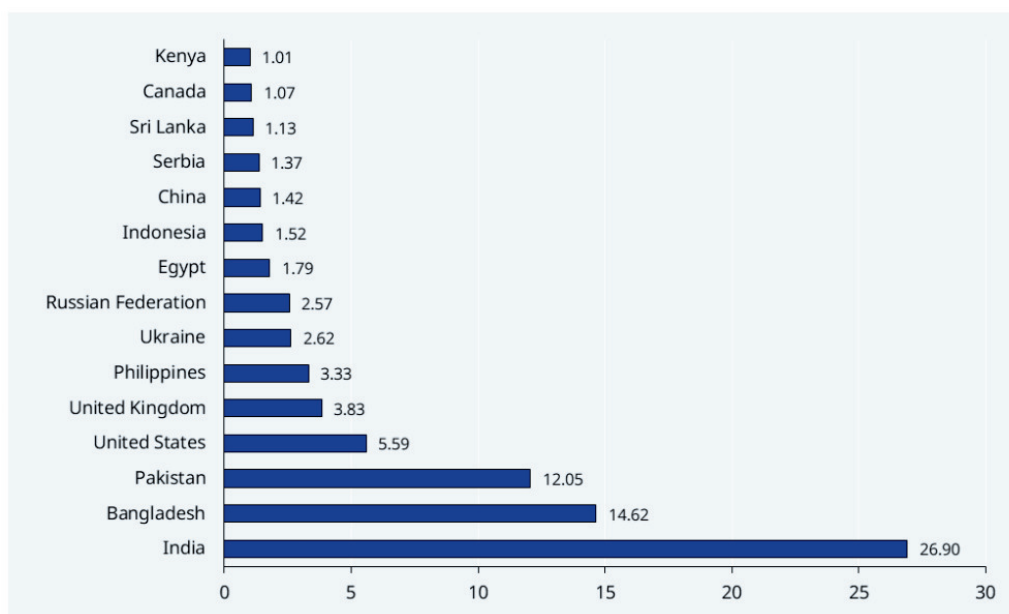
37. See [Appendix A](#), point 29.

38. [Workers' group statement on AI governance and Palestine](#), Plenary Morning Sitting, 3 June 2026

39. [Employer Vice-Chair statement on the Platform Economy Convention](#), Plenary debates, Morning sitting, 10 June 2026.

2.7 India and the Global South

Figure 2. Share of all workers on major online platforms globally, top 15 countries worldwide (per cent)



Note: The OLI 2020 survey is not comprehensive in its examination of online platforms, but rather only considers major online platforms covering the five largest English-language platforms, as well as three in Spanish and three in Russian.

Source: Online Labour Observatory, "The Online Labour Index 2020: Online Labour Supply", accessed on 31 August 2023.

Source: ILO Law and Practice Report (V1) / ILC.113, Report V(1), [Link](#)

India's decision to abstain from voting on the Convention should not be viewed as an unexpected development. Throughout the 113th and 114th sessions of the International Labour Conference, India consistently advocated a sovereignty-conscious, implementation-sensitive, and flexibility-oriented approach to regulating platform work.⁴⁰

Rather than opposing labour protections outright, its interventions repeatedly emphasised the diversity of national labour markets, the need to preserve domestic policy space, and concerns that overly prescriptive international standards could impose disproportionate regulatory burdens on rapidly expanding platform economies.

Bangladesh adopted a similar position, repeatedly stressing that labour protection, innovation, and employment generation must advance together rather than at one another's expense.⁴¹

40. See pg 5, 14 in [Part I](#) of Future Shift Labs' two-part analysis series on the ILO Convention No. 193. Also, see [Appendix D](#) for India's statements during the plenary sessions.

41. See [Appendix D](#) for further information on Bangladesh's statement.

This position reflects the difficult policy dilemma confronting countries such as India. As one of the **world's largest platform labour markets** while simultaneously positioning itself as a global digital economy and innovation hub, India faces competing objectives. On one hand, platform workers remain among the most vulnerable segments of the labour force and stand to benefit substantially from stronger labour protections. On the other, policymakers remain concerned that binding international obligations could increase compliance costs, and affect employment generation in a sector that continues to expand rapidly.

These priorities were visible across multiple stages of the negotiations.

-  During the 113th session, India argued that a binding Convention could impose excessive regulation on a rapidly expanding sector that provides livelihoods to millions of workers, while continuing to favour only a Recommendation even after the Conference had agreed on the form of the instrument.⁴²
-  Similarly, during discussions on automated systems, India supported amendments seeking to remove provisions that it considered excessively prescriptive, arguing that mandatory obligations could overregulate an evolving sector and create unnecessary burdens, particularly for Medium and Small Enterprises (MSMEs).⁴³

These positions foreshadowed India's eventual abstention at the adoption stage and demonstrate a consistent negotiating strategy rather than a last-minute shift in position.

India's statements during the 114th session repeatedly highlighted India's labour reforms, the consolidation of labour legislation into four labour codes, the recognition of gig and platform workers under the Social Security Code, the expansion of the e-Shram database, and the country's digital public infrastructure as evidence that national frameworks were already evolving to address the platform economy.⁴⁴

Consultations further suggested that India's position reflects a broader pattern within international multilateral standard-setting, where developing economies frequently express concerns that the costs of implementing global standards fall disproportionately on countries with more limited institutional capacity and larger informal labour markets.

Respondents drew parallels with international environmental negotiations, where countries in the Global South have argued that stricter international obligations can constrain development pathways while placing comparatively greater compliance burdens on developing economies.⁴⁵ These debates often invoke questions of equity, historical responsibility, and the legacies of colonial extraction and exploitation.

42. See pg 5 in [Part I](#) of Future Shift Labs' two-part analysis series on the ILO Convention No. 193.

43. See pg 14 in [Part I](#) of Future Shift Labs' two-part analysis series on the ILO Convention No. 193.

44. See [Appendix D](#) for India's statements during the plenary sessions.

45. See [The Global South is growing resentful of climate hypocrisy](#), *Washington Post*, January 2025.

The platform economy increasingly operates through transnational governance arrangements in which labour is disproportionately supplied from developing economies while platform ownership and headquarters remain concentrated in high-income countries.⁴⁶ As platform work increasingly operates across jurisdictions, the International Labour Organization should provide further guidance on the implementation of Convention No. 193 in transnational platform arrangements, including questions of jurisdiction, subcontracting, shared accountability, and regulatory responsibility.

While concerns regarding flexibility and national circumstances are understandable, the absence of support from countries with some of the largest platform workforces also illustrates one of the central challenges facing global labour governance: the countries where regulatory protections may be most urgently needed are often those that bear the greatest economic, administrative, and political costs of implementation.

46. Namita Datta et al., Working Without Borders: The Promise and Peril of Online Gig Work, World Bank, 2023.

2.8 The Way Forward

The adoption of the Convention marks the beginning, rather than the conclusion, of regulating platform work. Like most international labour standards, its ultimate significance will depend on how member states interpret, adapt, and implement its provisions within their own legal contexts. The Convention establishes a baseline, but considerable discretion remains regarding classification, enforcement mechanisms, social protection, and regulation of algorithmic management. Consequently, implementation is likely to evolve unevenly across jurisdictions. Consultations conducted for this report broadly reinforced this understanding. Accordingly, the report provides the following fundamental points as essential to the way forward:

-  **The Convention should serve as a benchmark rather than a regulatory blueprint.** Its greatest contribution lies in establishing minimum international principles that can guide domestic policymaking while leaving sufficient flexibility for countries to respond to their own labour market realities. Given the diversity of platform work across sectors, occupations, and contractual arrangements, implementation should combine common standards with sector-specific approaches where appropriate.
-  **Implementation should prioritise strengthening public institutions.** Legal recognition has limited value without accessible grievance mechanisms, administrative capacity, worker awareness, language accessibility, and effective enforcement capable of translating rights into practice.*
-  **The reality of working conditions should receive as much recognition as formal legal classification.** While employment classification remains important for allocating legal responsibility, implementation should ultimately be guided by the principle of the primacy of facts, ensuring that workers experience meaningful protections through fair remuneration, effective dispute resolution, social protection, and safe working conditions irrespective of contractual labels.
-  **India's federal structure should be leveraged to promote state-led policy innovation.** While the Union Government should establish broad principles and minimum standards, state governments should be encouraged to pilot context-specific approaches to welfare delivery, registration systems, data governance, grievance redressal, and platform accountability, with successful models informing future national policy.†

The following section turns to ground realities that continue to shape platform work discourse in India, and considers where existing regulatory frameworks, including the Convention itself, may require further reflection.

*National initiatives, including the recognition of gig and platform workers under the Social Security Code and the expansion of the e-Shram database, represent important institutional developments. At the same time, consultations repeatedly highlighted that implementation ultimately depends on state capacity. Many respondents pointed to practical barriers, including administrative complexity, limited awareness among workers, language barriers, and difficulties navigating registration and welfare systems, that continue to limit access to existing protections.

†Several experts argued that state governments are likely to remain the primary sites of policy experimentation. India's experience with labour regulation has historically demonstrated considerable variation across states [For example, see The Telangana Platform Based Gig Workers Act, 2026, Kerala State Platform Based Gig Workers (Registration and Welfare) Bill 2024, and Rajasthan Platform Based Gig Workers (Registration and Welfare) Act, 2023.], with innovations frequently emerging at the sub-national level before informing broader national reforms. Recent initiatives, including state-level legislation on gig and platform workers, illustrate how local governments are increasingly experimenting with approaches to welfare, data governance, dispute resolution, and platform accountability that respond more directly to local labour market conditions.



Current Challenges in the Platform Work Discourse

3. Current Challenges in the Platform Work Discourse

Having examined the Convention and the principal outcomes of the 114th International Labour Conference, this section turns to a broader question: what challenges remain when these global standards encounter local labour realities? Drawing on consultations with researchers, legal scholars, labour practitioners, and experts working directly with platform workers across India, the following discussion identifies several conceptual and practical tensions that continue to shape platform work beyond the Convention itself. These insights do not seek to critique the Convention alone, but they illustrate why regulating platform work remains complex and why implementation will require continued interpretation, adaptation, and dialogue.

3.1 The Heterogeneity of Platform Work

One of the Convention's greatest strengths, and simultaneously one of its greatest challenges, is its attempt to establish a common international framework for an exceptionally diverse category of work. Following the 114th session, the preamble now explicitly recognizes the differences among Member States regarding the development of the platform economy,⁴⁷ across diverse economic and regulatory contexts. During the negotiations too, several members argued that the platform economy operates differently across countries, requiring the instrument to remain sufficiently flexible to accommodate national circumstances.⁴⁸

During the session, the **Employers' delegate from Japan** argued that labour regulation must respond to the country's specific realities of labour shortages, demographic ageing, and a shrinking workforce. The intervention advocated flexible, country-specific approaches supported by technical cooperation and exchange of good practices, an illustration of how national contexts can differ substantially across Member States.⁴⁹

However, consultations conducted for this report suggest that heterogeneity extends well beyond differences between countries. Platform work itself has increasingly become an umbrella category that groups together fundamentally different forms of work.

47. See *Appendix A*, point 4.

48. See *Part I* of Future Shift Labs' two-part analysis series on the ILO Convention No. 193 for continued negotiations on this issue in the 113th session, which ultimately formed the basis for agreement on a 'principles-based' instrument.

49. See *Appendix D* for further details on Japan's statement.

While commonly discussed as a single labour market, platform work encompasses:

-  **Ride-hailing**
-  **Food delivery**
-  **Domestic and care work**
-  **Beauty and home services**
-  **Warehousing and logistics**
-  **Online freelancing**
-  **Crowd work and microtasks**

Although these forms of work share the platform facilitation/organization, they differ substantially in their organisation of work, worker autonomy, earnings, exposure to algorithmic management, bargaining power, dependence on platforms, and long-term livelihood prospects.

Consultations suggested that a common baseline of labour protections is essential, but that future regulation must increasingly recognise these differences rather than treating platform workers as a single homogeneous category.

The experiences of a ride-hailing driver, a domestic worker engaged through an app, and a freelance designer working for international clients through a digital platform cannot simply be collapsed into one framework.

3.2 Ground Realities: Holding Contradictions Together

Many of the assumptions on platform work that emerged during the ILO negotiations when discussing employment classification, algorithmic management, data governance, and platform responsibility, reveal contradictions when viewed through workers' everyday experiences. Consultations conducted for this report suggested that some of the most significant challenges facing platform workers lie in this gap between formal regulation and everyday realities.

Several examples illustrate this disconnect.

-  **Digital inclusion does not necessarily translate into access to rights.** Although initiatives such as the e-Shram portal have been widely presented as major steps towards extending social protection to gig and platform workers, several respondents noted that many workers remain unaware of the benefits available to them, struggle to navigate registration processes, or lack the digital literacy required to access welfare schemes in practice, pointing towards the need for awareness and literacy programmes.

-  **Algorithmic management often fails to recognise hyperlocal realities.** Respondents described neighbourhoods that remain poorly mapped by GPS systems, residential complexes where delivery workers are permitted entry only through specific service gates, and restaurants marking orders as “ready” before they are actually prepared. These seemingly small operational practices directly affect delivery times, performance metrics, incentives, and earnings, despite lying outside workers’ control. The resulting penalties are often generated by systems onto workers unable to account for local conditions.⁵⁰
-  **‘Control’ in platform work takes broad meanings.** Consultations challenged the distinction drawn between platforms merely facilitating work and actively organising it during the committee negotiations in 2025. Several respondents argued that platform control increasingly operates through indirect mechanisms, including incentive structures, algorithmically determined work allocation, ratings, and the financial obligations workers incur to remain active on platforms. For example, for workers renting vehicles, purchasing equipment, or servicing loans, declining work is rarely a genuine option. They must take enough work to compensate for the charges incurred at the outset, sometimes one-off and other times recurring. In practice, flexibility coexists with this compulsion, creating what one respondent described as an ‘illusion of choice’.⁵¹
-  **Platformisation increasingly extends beyond recognised platform workers.** Respondents also highlighted forms of digital labour management that fall outside conventional definitions of platform work. Residential management applications, for example, now shape the work of security guards, domestic workers, and other service personnel who are not employed by the platform itself but whose work is nevertheless mediated, monitored, and recorded through digital systems. Questions surrounding surveillance, data collection, informed consent, and digital literacy therefore extend well beyond workers traditionally classified as platform workers. It is unclear whether the Convention’s provisions on automated systems and personal data take these into account.⁵²

These observations reinforce the importance of continuous social dialogue between governments, workers, employers, and researchers as platform work continues to evolve. **In this context, the continued absence of the Indian Labour Conference, the country’s apex tripartite forum, which has not convened since 2015, represents a significant institutional gap.** At a time when labour markets are undergoing rapid technological change, regular tripartite dialogue is essential.

50. This insight is drawn from a consultation. For short descriptions, see *Appendix C*.

51. *Ibid.*

52. *Ibid.*

3.3. Algorithms and the Future of Platform Work

Much of contemporary literature frames technology primarily as a mechanism of exploitation. One expert, however, suggested that this framing captures only part of the reality, particularly in countries such as India where platform work often emerges against a backdrop of widespread informality, unemployment, and underemployment. For many workers, digital platforms provide improved access to income, greater labour market visibility, and, in some cases, a greater sense of dignity than the work opportunities previously available. In this sense, algorithms may also function as algorithms of aspiration.

At the same time, these opportunities coexist with persistent insecurity. Platform work may offer flexibility without predictability, visibility without stability, and income opportunities without meaningful pathways for long-term economic mobility. Several respondents therefore argued that it is more accurate to think in terms of **degrees of exploitation**, recognising that digital platforms instead expose long-standing structural weaknesses in labour markets and the absence of fair alternatives.

Importantly, **respondents cautioned against allowing workers' positive perceptions of platform work alone to determine policymaking.** While many workers may value the opportunities platforms provide relative to previous livelihoods, public policy cannot be based solely on subjective satisfaction. Regulation must instead ask whether platform work expands workers' long-term capabilities, security, and freedom, rather than simply providing immediate income.

Development as Freedom

Drawing on Amartya Sen's capability approach,⁵³ development should be understood as the expansion of people's freedoms and opportunities to live the lives they value. Applied to platform work, the central question therefore becomes: does this form of work expand workers' capabilities over time? If workers must routinely work excessively long hours, remain without social protection, and lack opportunities for skills development or upward mobility, platform work may improve livelihoods in the short term without substantially expanding long-term freedom.⁵⁴

Ultimately, both realities can coexist. In labour markets where formal employment has historically been the exception rather than the norm, platform work may represent an improvement over previous livelihoods without necessarily constituting decent work.

Effective regulation therefore requires moving beyond binary narratives of either opportunity or exploitation and instead recognising the complex and often contradictory realities through which workers pursue both survival and aspiration.

53. In his famous book *Development as Freedom* (1999), Sen presents a new and comprehensive understanding of development. He challenges the traditional view that development is merely economic growth or increase in national income. Instead, he argues that development should be understood as the expansion of human freedoms.

54. This insight is drawn from a consultation. For short descriptions, see *Appendix C*.

3.4. Governance Beyond the Human/Technology Binary

Consultations conducted for this report repeatedly questioned whether approaching platform governance primarily through the binary of ‘human versus technology’ adequately captures the underlying causes of labour precarity.

Human managers are not inherently more accountable than algorithms

Several respondents cautioned against assuming that replacing automated decision-making with human oversight necessarily results in fairer outcomes. In sectors such as beauty services,⁵⁵ where human managers continue to play a central role despite platform mediation, workers often remain subject to bias, arbitrary decision-making, and unequal treatment. In some situations, the respondent even suggested that algorithmic systems may partially conceal workers from prejudices rooted in caste, class, or other social identities as opacity against human judgement may reduce opportunities for discrimination.

Power can come from anywhere. Even when there is scope for human interaction, then also there is scope of bias. Technology is ultimately a product of society.

Equally, simply introducing human supervisors into platform work does not necessarily improve accountability. Team leaders and relationship managers frequently operate through similarly one way and unilateral structures, offering little meaningful opportunity for dialogue or contestation. The challenge therefore extends beyond whether decisions are made by humans or algorithms to the institutional conditions under which authority is exercised. However, as a matter of principle as well as practical implementation, experts agreed that **having a human actor in the decision making loop enables the enforcement of accountability.**

Technology, intermediation, and unionization

Labour intermediation has always existed. Digital platforms largely replace older forms of brokerage with new algorithmic intermediaries. One expert suggested that in some respects, technology has made work more accessible, by reducing dependence on local networks and traditional intermediaries, which in certain contexts, have operated in caste- or community-based labour markets.

Platforms have similarly altered possibilities for worker organisation. An expert stated how, historically there have been more associations than unions in Delhi, based on caste, class, religion, or ethnic community. The workers working for platforms have often enjoyed greater visibility and shared occupational identity, enabling new forms of collective mobilisation that were often more difficult under fragmented informal labour markets. Technology, therefore, while reshaping labour control also reshapes opportunities for collective action.⁵⁶

55. This insight is drawn from a consultation. For short descriptions, see *Appendix C*.

56. Ibid.

Platform work is ultimately a labour governance challenge

Perhaps the strongest message emerging from the consultations was that many of the challenges associated with platform work predate digital technology itself. Weak social protection, fragmented labour markets, unequal bargaining power, limited collective representation, and employers' attempts to distance themselves from responsibility have long characterised labour relations. Platformisation frequently amplifies these problems but does not create them.

From this perspective, governance should focus less on regulating technology in isolation and more on ensuring meaningful accountability regardless of where decisions originate. Workers require accessible mechanisms for explanation, appeal, grievance redress, and representation whether decisions are made by automated systems or human supervisors. Platform regulation must therefore move beyond technology governance towards broader questions of labour institutions, implementation capacity, and worker representation. The challenge for future policymaking is therefore to hold these contradictions together.



International Labour Organization
Organisation internationale du Travail
Organización Internacional del Trabajo



Organisation
internationale
du Travail



International
Labour
Organization



Org.
Inter-
del T.

84th session, 2024

• Conférence internationale du Travail

84th Session, 2024

• International Labour Conference

84th Sesión, 2024

• Conferencia Internacional del Trabajo



Conclusion and Recommendations

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

The adoption of the ILO Convention on Decent Work in the Platform Economy marks a significant milestone in global labour governance. It establishes, for the first time, an international framework for platform work and signals broad recognition that digital labour can no longer remain outside labour regulation. At the same time, the negotiations reveal the inherent complexity of regulating platform work across diverse legal systems, labour markets, and technological models. The compromises reached during the 114th International Labour Conference—including the omission of the Recommendation, the greater reliance on national discretion, and the introduction of additional clauses on employment classification—reflect the political realities of multilateral consensus-building as much as they do competing visions of the future of work.

For India, these developments present both an opportunity and a challenge. While the Convention provides an important global reference point, many of the most pressing questions surrounding platform work remain fundamentally domestic: how work is classified, how social protection is delivered, how algorithmic management is governed, and how workers participate in decisions that shape their working lives. As this report has argued, effective regulation will require moving beyond technology-centred narratives toward a deeper engagement with the underlying labour relations, institutional capacities, and social realities that structure platform work. Rather than offering definitive answers, the Convention should therefore be understood as the beginning of a longer process of experimentation, dialogue, and institutional development.

4.1 Recommendations

4.1.1 For the International Labour Organization

01 Prioritize adoption of the accompanying Recommendation.

Expedite negotiations on the accompanying draft Recommendation in the Blue Report to provide Member States with practical implementation guidance and operational clarity for Convention No. 193.⁵⁷

02 Support implementation through practical guidance and technical assistance.

Develop implementation toolkits, model legislative guidance, technical assistance, and peer-learning initiatives to help Member States operationalise Convention No. 193 while adapting its principles to national labour markets, legal systems, institutional capacity, business models, and sectors of platform work.

⁵⁷. Refer to 2.2 Removal of Recommendation.

03 Clarify the meaning of formalization in the platform economy.

In reference to Article 8(2), develop further interpretative guidance distinguishing digital registration and visibility from meaningful formalization through labour rights, social protection, collective representation, and decent working conditions.⁵⁸

05 Promote representative participation of platform workers in future standard-setting and implementation.

Ensure that Workers' Groups include platform workers themselves, reflecting the diversity of sectors, employment arrangements, genders, and geographical contexts across the platform economy.⁶¹

04 Strengthen the evidence base on implementation, with particular attention to cross-border platform work.

Support comparative research, periodic implementation reviews, and the development of guidance on cross-border platform work,⁵⁹ subcontracting arrangements,⁶⁰ and shared regulatory responsibilities to identify emerging challenges, disseminate good practices, and inform future revisions of international labour standards.

4.1.2 For the Government of India

Ministry of Labour & Employment, NITI Aayog, Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology, and relevant Central Ministries)

01 Use Convention No. 193 as a benchmark for strengthening India's platform work framework.

Within the stipulated time of 12 to 18 months from adoption in June 2026, deliberate towards the potential ratification of the Convention. Regardless, develop a phased roadmap for alignment with the Convention's principles, within India's legal and institutional context, including clearer allocation of responsibilities among platforms, workers, contractors, intermediaries and aggregators.

03 Recognise the diversity of platform work within national policymaking.

Complement a common national framework with sector-specific implementation guidelines developed through stakeholder consultations for major categories of platform work, reflecting differences in working conditions, earnings structures, occupational risks, and algorithmic management across sectors.

02 Reconvene the Indian Labour Conference and institutionalize evidence-based policymaking, among other institutional mechanisms for tripartite social dialogue.

Resume the Indian Labour Conference (last convened in 2015)⁶² and establish a standing advisory mechanism involving platform workers, trade unions, employers, platform companies, researchers, civil society, and state governments to inform the design, implementation, and periodic review of platform work regulation.

04 Prioritise implementation of existing labour protections.

Strengthen operationalisation of the Code on Social Security and other relevant labour legislation before introducing additional regulatory obligations, with particular attention to platform workers.

58. Refer to 2.5 Formalization of Work through the Platform Economy.

59. Expanding on Article 19 in 'Terms and conditions of employment or engagement' in ILO Convention No. 193

60. For discussion, see 2.7 India and the Global South.

61. The most representative in the platform economy may not always be the same as the most representative in the wider economy. For further commentary on ILO representation of workers, refer to: [Will the ILO endorse platform work without labour rights?](#) International Alliance of App-based Transport Workers, April 2026

62. For discussion, see 3.2 Ground Realities: Holding Contradictions Together.

05 **Improve awareness and accessibility of digital welfare infrastructure.**⁶³

Develop a coordinated outreach strategy for e-Shram and other labour welfare schemes through partnerships between the Ministry of Labour and Employment, State Labour Departments, platform companies, Common Service Centres (CSCs), and worker organisations. This should include multilingual awareness campaigns, assisted registration drives, digital literacy programmes, and local facilitation mechanisms to improve enrolment and access to benefits.

06 **Strengthen safeguards for algorithmic management, worker data, and digital privacy.**

The Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoLE) and the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) should jointly develop national standards on algorithmic management, building on the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023. The framework should ensure transparency in automated decision-making, meaningful human review, accessible appeal mechanisms, proportionate collection and use of workers' data, and safeguards against arbitrary deactivation.

4.1.3 For State Governments

Departments of Labour, Social Welfare, Skill Development, and relevant State Agencies

01 **Continue state-level legislative and policy innovation on platform work.**

Build upon emerging state initiatives by developing context-specific legislation and welfare measures consistent with national frameworks and the principles of Convention No. 193.⁶⁴

02 **Strengthen implementation capacity for access to welfare schemes as well as monitoring and evaluation.**

Ensure that digital registration systems and welfare schemes are supported by accessible enrolment processes, multilingual services, local facilitation, grievance mechanisms, effective on-ground administration, and periodic monitoring of implementation outcomes.

03 **Institutionalise state-level tripartite dialogue and worker engagement.**

Establish regular consultation forums bringing together worker organisations, platform companies, employers, researchers, civil society, and local governments, while partnering with worker organisations to improve awareness of labour rights, welfare schemes, and available institutional support.

04 **Strengthen local grievance redress and dispute resolution.**

Develop accessible, time-bound mechanisms through which platform workers can challenge deactivations, payment disputes, algorithmic decisions, and workplace grievances through State Labour Departments or designated platform work facilitation centres.

4.1.4 For Researchers and Civil Society

01 **Advance research on formalization in the platform economy.**⁶⁵

Examine what meaningful formalization (Article 8(2) of Convention No. 193) entails beyond digital registration, including labour rights, social protection, collective representation, economic mobility, and long-term employment security.

63. For discussion, see 2.8 *The Way Forward* and 3.2 *Ground Realities: Holding Contradictions Together*.

64. For discussion on the significance of state level action in furthering advancements suited to local labour realities, see 2.8 *The Way Forward*.

65. For discussion, see 2.5 *Formalization of Work through the Platform Economy*.

02 Broaden the scope of platform work research.

Generate evidence on less visible forms of platform-mediated work—including domestic services, care work, beauty services, warehouse work, online freelancing, cross-border digital labour, and subcontracting arrangements—while examining how platformization and algorithmic management are reshaping work across traditional sectors beyond digital labour platforms.

04 Institutionalise research-policy engagement.

Establish regular policy consultations, advisory groups, and evidence-sharing platforms that bring together researchers, governments, regulators, platform companies, and civil society to translate research into actionable policy reforms.

03 Strengthen participatory and worker-centred research.

Involve platform workers, worker organisations, and affected communities throughout research design, data collection, interpretation, and policy evaluation to ensure that evidence reflects lived experiences.

05 Monitor implementation through comparable evidence.

Document national implementation experiences, develop common indicators on working conditions, earnings, algorithmic management, occupational safety, and worker well-being, and identify emerging good practices and implementation gaps to support comparative learning and future revisions of international labour standards.

4.1.5 For Platform Companies

01 Align internal policies with the principles of Convention No. 193.

Review and update company policies on algorithmic management, transparency, worker communication, grievance redressal, occupational safety, and data governance to reflect the principles established by the Convention.

02 Strengthen transparency and human review of platform decisions.

Provide workers with clear explanations and accessible human review for significant decisions—including deactivation, suspension, payment disputes, and disciplinary actions—and communicate changes to algorithmic systems transparently.

03 Institutionalise worker engagement.

Establish regular consultation mechanisms with worker representatives to inform changes to platform policies, incentive structures, safety measures, and working conditions, moving beyond one-way communication towards meaningful social dialogue.

Appendix A: *Blue Report vs Final Convention*

S. No.	Article	Old Text (Blue Report Draft)	Final Adopted Text
1	Preamble	"created opportunities for enterprises and business development, and generated work and income opportunities"	"created opportunities for enterprises and business development, opened new pathways for the formalization of work and generated work and income opportunities"
2	Preamble	"Recognizing the existing decent work deficits and challenges in the platform economy, relating notably to the impact of the use of automated systems on the working conditions of digital platform workers or their access to work"	"Recognizing existing decent work deficits in the platform economy"
3	Preamble	—	"Acknowledging the role of digital labour platforms and micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, and the need to support an enabling environment for sustainable enterprises and promotion of fair business competition"
4	Preamble	—	"Recognizing the differences among Member States regarding the development of the platform economy, as well as the diversity of business models and work arrangements"
5	Article 4(2)(b) Occupational Safety and Health	"national conditions and practice"	"national conditions and practice and the classification of digital platform workers' status in employment"
6	Article 5 Occupational Safety and Health	"Each Member shall take measures to ensure"	"Each Member shall take appropriate measures to ensure"
7	Heading VI	"Employment promotion"	"Promotion of decent work"

8	New Article 8	—	“Each Member shall take appropriate measures to facilitate formalization of work via digital labour platforms, including registration of self-employed workers.”
9	Article 8 → Article 9 Classification of Employment	“existence of an employment relationship”	“existence or non-existence of an employment relationship”
10	Article 8 → Article 9 Classification of Employment	“guided primarily by the facts relating to the performance of work and the remuneration”	“guided mainly by the facts relating to the performance of work, the remuneration or payment ... among other elements”
11	Article 9(1) → Article 10(1) Remuneration or Payment	“paid in full, on time and in legal tender or, to the extent authorized by national laws and regulations or collective agreements, in kind”	“paid in a timely manner, in full, subject to lawful deductions, to the extent authorized by national laws and regulations or collective agreements, and by lawful means of payment, including electronic transfer where permitted under national laws and regulations”
12	Article 9(2)(a) → Article 10(2)(a) Remuneration or Payment	“receive remuneration that is adequate and the amount of which...”	“receive remuneration, the amount of which...”
13	Article 9(2)(b) → Article 10(2)(b) Remuneration or Payment	“are reasonably compensated for expenses or other costs incurred in the performance of their work”	“are compensated, according to national law and practice, for expenses or other costs incurred in the performance of their work”
14	Article 9(3) → Article 10(3) Remuneration or Payment	“shall, to the extent possible and as appropriate, extend the measures adopted under paragraph 2”	“shall give consideration to whether the measures adopted notably under paragraph 2(a) shall be provided”
15	Article 10 → Article 11 Remuneration or Payment	“regularly provide digital platform workers”	“provide in a timely manner digital platform workers”

16	Article 11 → Article 12 Social Security	“ensure that digital platform workers enjoy social security protection”	“ensure that digital platform workers have access to social security protection”
17	Article 13 Automated Systems	“Each Member shall require digital labour platforms to ensure that their use of the automated systems referred to in Article 12 does not infringe on the fundamental principles and rights at work.”	Deleted entirely
18	New Article 14 Automated Systems	—	“Each Member shall take appropriate measures to ensure responsible use of automated systems by digital labour platforms as defined in Article 1(a), as consistent with Member States’ obligations to respect, promote and realize the fundamental principles and rights at work.”
19	Article 14(a) → Article 15(1)(a) Automated Systems	“a written explanation for decisions that impact their working conditions or access to work”	“a written explanation for significant decisions that adversely impact their working arrangements and access to work”
20	Article 14(b) → Article 15(1)(b) Automated Systems	“a human review of decisions”	“a review, as appropriate, of decisions”
21	Article 15 opening sentence Automated Systems	“digital platform workers and their representatives or representative workers’ organizations and, where they exist, organizations representing digital platform workers, have access on request”	“digital platform workers have access, on request” Added: “...taking into account the classification of status in employment,”
22	New Article 15(2) Automated Systems	—	“In giving effect to paragraph 1, each Member shall ensure that digital labour platforms have appropriate human involvement.”

23	Article 15 → Article 16(1) Personal data and privacy	“processed only to the extent strictly necessary for the purpose of their employment or engagement or as required by national laws and regulations”	“processed for the legitimate purpose for which it is collected, and not further processed in a manner that is incompatible with the rights and protections set out in this Convention”
24	New Article 16(2) Personal data and privacy	—	“Each Member shall ensure that digital platform workers have the right to request access to, and the rectification and erasure of, their personal data processed by digital labour platforms, subject to applicable data retention laws.”
25	Article 16 → Article 17 Suspension, deactivation, termination	“otherwise unjustified grounds”	“otherwise unlawful grounds”
26	Article 18 → Article 19 Terms and conditions	“shall be governed by the laws and regulations of the country where the work is performed”	“shall preferably be governed by the laws and regulations of the country where the work is performed”
27	Article 19 Terms and conditions	—	“taking into account the contractual arrangements”
28	Article 23 → Article 24(1) Implementation	“in consultation with representative organizations of employers and workers and, where they exist, organizations representing digital labour platforms and digital platform workers”	“in consultation with the most representative organizations of employers and workers”
29	New Article 24(4) Implementation	—	“In implementing this Convention, each Member shall take appropriate measures to protect commercially sensitive information of digital labour platforms.”
30	Articles 26–33 Final Provisions	No equivalent	Ratification, entry into force, denunciation, notification, revision, authentic texts provisions

Appendix B: A Brief Timeline of ILO Negotiations on Platform Work

Date	Purpose / Outcome
Mar 2021	The Governing Body requested a tripartite meeting of experts on decent work in the platform economy.
10 - 14 October 2022	Meeting of experts on decent work in the platform economy
October–November 2022	After reviewing the meeting outcomes, the Governing Body: → decided to place the item on the agenda of the 113th International Labour Conference (ILC) → requested a normative gap analysis
Feb 24, 2023	Normative Gap Analysis on Decent Work in the Platform Economy report was published
Mar 2023	Based on the gap analysis, the Governing Body decided to: → initiate a standard-setting process → adopt a double-discussion procedure (113th and 114th ILC sessions)
Jan 31, 2024	Report V(1) (White Report): Analysis of law and practice and questionnaire → problem + a questionnaire for member states → analysis of platform work worldwide
Feb 3, 2025	Report V(2) (Yellow Report): Summary of the replies received and proposed Conclusions → member states' replies → proposed conclusions
113th International Labour Conference (First Discussion)	
During Conference (113): 02 - 13 June 2025	
Aug 15, 2025	Report V(3) (Brown Report): Decent work in the platform economy - the ILO Office Commentary on the draft texts of a Convention and Recommendation
Mar 2, 2026	Report V(4) (Blue Report): Realizing decent work in the platform economy: Summary of the observations received and Draft Convention and Recommendation → observations by member states on the above draft in V3
114th International Labour Conference (Second Discussion)	
01 - 12 June 2026	→ Final negotiation and adoption stage

Appendix C: *Brief Descriptions of Consultations with Experts*

Dr. Aditya Ray is a Senior Lecturer at the University of the West of England Bristol. His research examines the intersections of digitalisation, labour, global development, and southern urbanisms, with particular focus on platform work, digital labour supply chains, and the experiences of app-based workers in the Global South. The consultation informed the report's discussion of digitally organised informality, the meaning of formalization in the platform economy, the instability of formal-informal distinctions, the limitations of the human-technology binary, worker unionisation and collective organisation in India, and the need for policymaking that recognizes the often contradictory realities of platform work.

Dr. Anjana Karumathil is a Professor of Practice at the Indian Institute of Management Kozhikode. Her research focuses on platform economies, AI and work, labour market efficiency, and the evolving nature of work motivation, drawing on extensive experience across academia and industry. The consultation informed the report's discussion of the broader significance of Convention No. 193, the relationship between platform work and India's labour market, debates on formalization and worker visibility, and comparative perspectives on international regulatory approaches, including the EU Platform Work Directive.

Ayushi Roy is an independent urban researcher currently working with the People's Resource Centre, with extensive fieldwork experience in Delhi. Her research examines the intersections of technology, urban governance, and everyday labour. The consultation informed the report's discussion of platformization of work beyond the limited category of 'platform workers', drawing attention to workers indirectly governed by digital platforms—such as security guards and other service workers in residential societies—the everyday realities of digital surveillance and data collection, and the implications of platform-mediated systems for workers' privacy and labour relations.

Damni Kain is a Doctoral Research Scholar at the University of Cambridge whose research examines the intersection of technology and labour, drawing extensively on fieldwork in India's beauty industry. The consultation informed the report's discussion of the limitations of the human-technology binary, the importance of situating platform work within the longer history of gig and informal labour in India, the ways in which platform work continues to straddle formal and informal employment, and the need to understand platform governance as extending beyond technology to broader questions of labour and social relations.

Avanti Deshpande is a Lawyer and Policy Researcher interested in technology, law, and society, currently associated with the Internet Freedom Foundation. The consultation informed the report's discussion of the role of international standard-setting and the implications of Convention No. 193 for developing economies, particularly how the costs of implementing international labour standards can fall unevenly on countries with large informal labour markets and limited institutional capacity. These insights also informed the report's interpretation of India's position during the negotiations and the broader relationship between development, equity, and international labour governance in the Global South.

Dr. Tanya Rabban is an Assistant Professor at Amity University, Mohali, whose research examines platform work through fieldwork with ride-hailing drivers and food delivery workers. The consultation informed the report's discussion of workers' preferences for flexibility alongside minimum social protection, the importance of predictable earnings and transparent platform policies, the limited awareness and uptake of welfare initiatives such as e-Shram, and the ways in which algorithmic pricing and compensation shape workers' everyday experiences.

Vageesh Vishnoi is a Doctoral Research Scholar at the Indian Institute of Technology Delhi whose research and fieldwork examines platform work. The consultation informed the report's discussion of the importance of tripartite social dialogue, the role of the Indian Labour Conference in shaping labour policy, the implicit forms of control exercised through platform work, the heterogeneity of platform work across sectors, the limitations of algorithmic management in reflecting on-ground realities, and the relevance of Amartya Sen's capability approach for thinking about the future of work.

Appendix D: Country Statements Referenced in the Report

The report draws on selected country statements delivered during the 114th International Labour Conference (June 2026) to illustrate national positions on the regulation of platform work and the negotiations leading to Convention No. 193.

The summaries below are prepared by the author based on the official ILO webcast recordings. They are intended as concise analytical summaries of the interventions and should not be read as verbatim transcripts. Readers are encouraged to consult the official recordings for the complete statements.

India

9 June 2026 | Afternoon Plenary

Statement by Alok Bansidhar Shriram (Employers' Delegate, India)

Source : <https://live.ilo.org>

Key themes

- Technology should augment rather than replace human capability.
- The impact of AI depends on policies, institutions, and social dialogue.
- India's digital public infrastructure supports labour market formalization.
- Labour reforms through the four Labour Codes followed extensive tripartite consultations.
- Recognition of gig and platform workers under the Code on Social Security.
- e-Shram, digital employment initiatives, and skills development were presented as evidence of ongoing labour reforms.
- Support for a flexible, principles-based international framework that accommodates national circumstances.

10 June 2026 | Morning Plenary

Statement by Shobha Karandlaje (Minister of State for Labour and Employment, India)

Source : <https://live.ilo.org>

Key themes

- Consolidation of 29 labour laws into four Labour Codes.
- Recognition of gig and platform workers within India's labour reforms.
- Expansion of the e-Shram portal and digital public infrastructure.
- Progress towards universal social security coverage.
- Labour market performance, employment generation, and women's labour force participation.
- India's role in AI governance, international labour mobility, and digital innovation.

12 June 2026 | Closing Plenary

Statement by Ashutosh Apa Teli Pednekar (India)

Source : <https://live.ilo.org>

Key themes

- Recognition of the significance of Convention No. 193.
- Emphasis that successful implementation must reflect diverse national circumstances.
- Reference to India's existing labour reforms and the e-Shram platform.

Bangladesh

12 June 2026 | Closing Plenary

Statement by Md. Aminul Islam

Source : <https://live.ilo.org>

Key themes

- Labour protection, employment generation, and innovation should advance together.
- Regulatory flexibility is particularly important for developing and least-developed countries.
- Overly prescriptive regulation may undermine inclusive development.

Japan

5 June 2026 | Morning Plenary

Statement by Yoshinori Ando (Employers' Delegate, Japan)

Source : <https://live.ilo.org>

Key themes

- AI governance should reflect differing national contexts.
- Japan highlighted demographic challenges including labour shortages and an ageing workforce.
- Favoured voluntary, practical, and country-specific approaches over prescriptive international standards.
- Encouraged technical cooperation, best-practice sharing, and capacity building for inclusive AI adoption.

About the Author

Prachi Sharma is a research and policy professional whose work examines the societal implications of emerging technologies. Her research focuses on AI and society, digital infrastructures, technology and labour, and political economy approaches to technological change.

A graduate of the University of Cambridge, where she completed an MPhil in Digital Humanities as a Commonwealth Scholar, Prachi brings experience spanning academia, policy research, government engagement, and the creative industries. She has led and contributed to projects on employment, skills, and technology policy, and has worked on nationally significant public-facing initiatives, including the Partition Museum and the Parliament Museum project at the Lok Sabha Secretariat.

As Research Manager at Future Shift Labs, she leads research and policy analysis on AI and society, helping bridge interdisciplinary scholarship with real-world policy impact.

For questions and feedback, reach out to her at: prachisharma51198@gmail.com



Visit our website
www.futureshiftlabs.com

FUTURE SHIFT LABS
Skymark one, 13th floor, Sector 98, Noida