



113th International Labour Conference
General Discussion on
The ILO's DG report
Jobs, Rights and Growth
Oral Statement - Check against delivery

Speaker: Gizem Demir Nirenbold, Representative of Make Mothers Matter

Honourable Director-General, distinguished delegates,

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Director-General's Report, Jobs, Rights and Growth: Reinforcing the Connection.

Make Mothers Matter welcomes the report's focus on the challenges in today's labour markets—especially in light of digital and green transitions, demographic change, and rising inequalities. We fully support the push for decent work, stronger rights, and more attention to gender disparities and the care economy.

But we are concerned by the report's narrow economic lens. It still centres GDP growth as the main measure of success—despite acknowledging that growth is no longer reliably linked to more jobs or better rights.

This is a missed opportunity. Our current economic model is failing to deliver decent work, safeguard rights, or tackle the crises we face—like climate change and inequality.

And it completely overlooks a huge, invisible part of the economy: unpaid caregivers, especially mothers.

According to the ILO, 708 million women are out of the labour force due to unpaid care responsibilities¹. Most of them are mothers—who provide the majority of unpaid care around the world. They raise children, care for relatives, hold families together, and enable others to work.

But this comes at a cost: to their financial independence, career prospects, long-term security, and especially their mental health and wellbeing.

Yet this vital contribution is ignored. It's invisible in GDP. And it's left out of most labour and economic policies.

Let's be clear: care is not just a personal issue—it's a public, structural issue of gender equality, economic justice, and human rights. Recognising, valuing, supporting and sharing this unpaid work is essential to creating a fairer future of work.

¹ Source: <https://www.ilo.org/resource/news/unpaid-care-work-prevents-708-million-women-participating-labour-market>

And the problem runs deeper. GDP doesn't count what really matters. It ignores environmental damage, climate change, biodiversity loss, and rising inequality.

In short, we need a paradigm shift. We must redefine what the economy is for—and what we value. Our systems must put the wellbeing of people and the planet first. They must support the work of care that underpins everything else.

Whether we call it a wellbeing economy, a caring economy, or a human rights economy, the message is the same: the economy must serve people—not the other way around. And care must be at the centre.

We urge the ILO and its members to:

- Begin a serious conversation on how to redesign our economic systems—and create a roadmap to shift quickly toward a wellbeing economy centred on care;
- Take a holistic approach to work—valuing both paid and unpaid work, and ensuring unpaid care is properly recognised, supported, and shared more fairly across society.

Let's remember: every job, every economy, and every society begin with care—most often provided by mothers.

If we truly want to connect jobs, rights, and growth with human wellbeing, we must start by recognising motherhood and caregiving as the foundation of it all.

I'll end with the words of UN Secretary-General António Guterres, who said during the pandemic: "The pandemic has shown us who is doing the work that really matters: nurses, teachers, care workers. As we recover, we need to remember this. It is time to end the inequities of unpaid care work and create new economic models that work for everyone."²

About Make Mothers Matter

Since 1947, MMM has been at the forefront of advocating for mothers' rights and recognition worldwide, raising awareness amongst policy makers and the general public on the contributions of mothers towards social, cultural and economic development. MMM has no political or religious affiliations. Working with local partners, MMM advocates on influential global platforms including the European Union, the United Nations (General Consultative Status), and UNESCO, ensuring that the lived realities of mothers are voiced and acknowledged. More on <https://makemothersmatter.org>

² Antonio Guterres, UN Secretary-General, Town Hall with Young Women from Civil Society Organisations on 31 August 2020