

International Labour Conference 114th Session

Geneva, June 2026

Item VI. General discussion on advancing the transformative agenda for gender equality in the world of work

The International Council of Nurses, representing over 30 million nurses worldwide, welcomes the ILO's continued leadership in advancing gender equality. Gender equality is not only a human rights issue, but fundamental to economic resilience, social stability and sustainable development.

These issues are highly relevant to nursing, the largest health profession globally and predominantly female. Inequalities experienced by women in the labour market are reflected in nursing, including pay inequity, undervaluation of care work, workplace violence, unsafe conditions, limited leadership opportunities and unequal unpaid care responsibilities.

Health systems and economies depend on nurses, yet nursing is still too often treated as a labour cost rather than a strategic investment. Investment in the care economy must include decent work, fair remuneration, safe staffing, quality education, leadership development, social protection and workplaces free from violence and harassment, including in conflict areas, emergencies and under-resourced settings.

Professional regulation is central to gender equality and workforce protection. Nurses must also have a meaningful voice in decisions affecting their work. In 2025, ICN adopted a new global Definition of Nursing. We call on the ILO to formally recognise this Definition within international labour and workforce frameworks, and to ensure occupational classifications accurately distinguish regulated nursing professionals, including advanced practice nurses.