Good morning!! It is a great pleasure and deep honor to be here - in Ahmedabad, the birthplace of SEWA and a city with so many home-based workers - to celebrate the 20th. anniversary of Convention 177 on Homework. Thanks to Sapna Joshi and Firoza Mehrotra of HomeNet South Asia for inviting me to speak at this auspicious occasion.

The WIEGO network which I represent was born out of the campaign for Convention 177. In June 1995, I visited Geneva to show solidarity to SEWA and the home-based worker organizations which were campaigning for the convention. When I asked what I could do to help, Ela Bhatt of SEWA said that the campaign needed statistics on the numbers of home-based workers to convince the country delegates to the ILC of the significance of home-based work – as the employer group was blocking the convention and the countries would have a deciding vote. Over the next several months, with another friend of SEWA, Jennefer Sebstad, I pulled together all of the statistics we could find on home-based workers around the world – and published a report. When the Convention was passed in June 1996, Ela Bhatt and Renana Jhabvala sent me a postcard from Geneva which read: “The employers had their ideology. The workers had their statistics. The Convention was passed”.

Convention 177 on Home Work was the first international labor convention on a specific category of informal worker. It called for the recognition of homeworkers as wage workers and those who give out work to them as employers, even if they used intermediaries or contractors. It called for equal treatment as other wage workers for home workers, including the right to organize, freedom from discrimination, social protection including occupational health and safety plus maternity benefits, it called for fair remuneration. And it called for the inclusion of homeworkers in national labor force statistics. And it mandated that member states adopt national policies reflecting these provisions. Over the past 20 years, 10 countries have ratified the convention and several countries have adopted national policies or laws in support of HBWs.

LOOKING BACK

**Looking back, I am amazed at how far home-based workers and their organizations have come over the past two decades**

In 1996, there was only 1 regional organization of home-based workers: HomeNet

South East Asia.

Today, in 2016, there are 3 regional organizations of home-based workers

HomeNet South Asia

HomeNet Eastern Europe – in addition to HNSEA

Also, the WIEGO network has identified and begun to support:

producer groups and coops of HBWs in 4 countries in Africa

coops and trade unions of HBWs in 6 countries in LAC

In 1996, home workers, their activities, their contribution to the economy

were not widely recognized or well understood

In 2016, there is far greater recognition of home workers – and far greater

recognition that home-based work is an important part of the global economy; that homeworkers produce for global value chains; that homeworkers can be found in a wide range of industries from garment making to shoe making to food processing to electronic assembly to packaging of pharmaceutical and other products

In 1996, home workers secured major recognition as wage workers.

In 2016, home workers have also secured recognition of their home as a

workplace, of their need for secure housing tenure and basic infrastructure

services to make their homes more productive work places, and of their contributions to the costs of production – the fact that they, not their employer, pay for the work place, the equipment, the electricity and transport

In 1996, only 7 countries had statistics on home-based workers

Today, in 2016, over 50 countries have statistics on home-based workers

**Looking back, I am amazed at how far home-based workers and their organizations have come over the past year – since the first global conference of home-based workers in New Delhi in February 2015** – when more than 100 HBWs and their supporters from 24 countries adopted the Delhi Declaration – the first global declaration of home-based workers – which calls for better housing and infrastructure services as well as the ratification and implementation of Convention 177.

Over the past year,

* HBWs have taken part in a delegation of informal workers to the 2015 ILC which successfully campaigned for key provisions in the ILO global standard, Recommendation 204 on the gradual transition from informal to formal sector. Recommendation 204 states that most of those who work in the informal economy, including home-based workers, are vulnerable workers who need social and legal protections and mandates that informal livelihoods should be protected during the gradual transition from informality to formality
* HBWs have taken part in aa Africa regional conference on Fair Trade and HBWs organized by WIEGO

Over the past year, home-based work – the home as work place – has been recognized in the preparations for Habitat III, the 3rd. UN Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development, thanks to the efforts of the WIEGO network and delegations of informal workers who have taken part in the preparations for Habitat III. We are hopeful that the New Urban Agenda, the document to be adopted at the Habitat III, will recognize that homes are work places – that basic infrastructure services make homes more productive and that relocations of informal settlements undermine the productivity and incomes of home-based workers and other informal workers.

And, just last week, Renana Jhabvala of SEWA, and chair of the WIEGO Board, joined a high-level UN panel on Women’s Economic Empowerment convened by Ban Ki Moon – through which she will campaign for the economic empowerment of home-based workers and other women informal workers.

LOOKING FORWARD

Looking forward, tomorrow right here in Ahmedabad - home-based workers will adopt a Platform of Needs and Demands relating to their production global value chains – and, in June this year, a delegation of home-based workers will present this Platform at the General Discussion on Global Value Chains at the International Labour Conference in Geneva, Switzerland

Looking forward, home-based workers will be part of a delegation of informal workers who will take part in the Habitat III summit in Quito, Ecuador in October this year – where they will demand that support to urban informal workers and their livelihoods is on the New Urban Agenda to be adopted by the global community at Habitat III.

Looking forward, the WIEGO network is planning a regional workshop of home-based workers in Latin America and will continue to support the organizations of home-based workers in Africa. We are hopeful that organizations of home-based workers from Africa and Latin America will join hands with the three regional HomeNets to form a global alliance!!!

Let me close by congratulating the three regional HomeNets and your affiliates in nearly 30 countries for all that you have been able to achieve over the past two decades – you have created a global movement of home-based workers. Three cheers and best wishes for the next twenty years!!! Thank you.