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**Intergovernmental Group of Experts on**  
**Consumer Protection Law and Policy**  
Eighth session  
Geneva, 1 and 2 July 2024

## **Report of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Consumer Protection Law and Policy on its eighth session**

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on 1 and 2 July 2024

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## **I. Action by the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Consumer Protection Law and Policy**

### **A. Agreed conclusions**

*The Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Consumer Protection Law and Policy,*

*Recalling* the resolution adopted by the Eighth United Nations Conference to Review All Aspects of the Set of Multilaterally Agreed Equitable Principles and Rules for the Control of Restrictive Business Practices (Geneva, 2020),<sup>1</sup>

*Recalling* General Assembly resolution 70/1 of 25 September 2015 titled “Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”,

*Recalling further* General Assembly resolution 70/186 of 22 December 2015 titled “Consumer protection”, adopting the revised United Nations guidelines for consumer protection,

*Taking note* of the decision of the fifteenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (Bridgetown, 2021) in paragraphs 56, 62 and 127 (z) that “in the process of transformation, it is fundamental for fair, sound and robust competition and consumer protection policies and enforcement to maintain a robust, level playing field and enhance transparency for all participants, so that market access is not under anticompetitive practices. Ensuring effective competition, including through support in developing and implementing competition policies and through cooperation among competition authorities, paired with robust consumer protection in the market, will help foster economic efficiency, resulting in safer and better products at lower prices for consumers”, that “multilateral dialogue and cooperation are crucial in areas such as the governance of new and emerging technologies, including those related to data management, competition and consumer protection” and that UNCTAD should “continue to assist developing countries to formulate and implement competition and consumer protection policies and laws, facilitate cooperation among competition and consumer protection agencies, conduct peer reviews and foster the exchange of knowledge and best practices, including through multilateral forums, such as the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Competition Law and Policy and the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Consumer Protection Law and Policy, and by contributing to the implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conferences to Review All Aspects of the Set of Multilaterally Agreed Equitable Principles and Rules for the Control of Restrictive Business Practices and of the revised United Nations guidelines for consumer protection”,<sup>2</sup>

*Reaffirming* the fundamental role that consumer protection law and policy plays in the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, by ensuring access by consumers to essential goods and services, protecting consumers from fraudulent and deceptive commercial practices and from harms associated with unsafe products and empowering consumers by boosting consumer education to ensure more informed choices,

*Recognizing* the important contribution of UNCTAD, serving as the focal point on consumer protection within the United Nations system, in improving consumer protection at the global level and advancing policy discussions, in particular on consumer product safety, sustainable consumption, electronic commerce (e-commerce) and online dispute resolution and the gender perspective,

*Recognizing* the need to strengthen the work of UNCTAD in consumer protection law and policy so as to enhance its development role and benefits for consumers and businesses,

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<sup>1</sup> TD/RBP/CONF.9/9.

<sup>2</sup> TD/541/Add.2.

*Recognizing* that consumer laws, standards harmonization and international cooperation are needed to improve consumer protection and trust in the tourism sector; and calling upon businesses to provide sustainable choices considering consumers' legitimate needs and expeditious, transparent, accessible and effective dispute resolution channels,

*Recognizing* the positive impact that voluntary peer reviews of consumer protection law and policy have in improving consumer protection legal, public policy and institutional frameworks in peer reviewed countries,

*Recognizing* that consumer associations play a fundamental role in representing the interests of consumers; educating, informing, advising and defending them; distributing essential goods and services; and contributing to monitoring markets,

*Taking note* of the deliberations of the informal working groups on consumer product safety, on consumer protection in e-commerce and on consumer protection and gender, and of the reports presented at its eighth session,

*Noting* the important written and oral contributions from consumer protection authorities and other participants that enriched the debate during its eighth session,

*Taking note with appreciation* of the documentation prepared by the UNCTAD secretariat for its eighth session,

1. *Welcomes* the efforts of member States and other stakeholders in implementing the United Nations guidelines for consumer protection and reaffirms its commitment to providing an annual forum and modalities for multilateral consultations, discussions and exchanges of views between member States on matters related to the guidelines;
2. *Underlines* the direct and positive impact that the adoption of consumer protection policies by member States has on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular in reducing inequalities within and among countries, promoting responsible production and consumption patterns and strengthening the means of implementation and revitalizing the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development;
3. *Congratulates* the Governments of Chile, Gabon, Indonesia, Morocco, Peru and Thailand for the successful implementation of UNCTAD voluntary peer review of consumer protection law and policy recommendations; and invites interested member States to volunteer for future peer reviews of consumer protection law and policy as implemented by consumer protection authorities, including as peer reviewers;
4. *Encourages* member States to harmonize and strengthen consumer protection laws and standards in the tourism sector, promoting shared responsibility among stakeholders and enhancing consumer data protection, trust in digital platforms, dispute resolution channels and sustainable practices to meet evolving consumer needs;
5. *Encourages* member States to recognize the importance of and support the development of independent consumer groups in accordance with the social, economic and environmental circumstances of the country and the needs of its population, including through participating in policymaking, implementing education and information campaigns, advising consumers, facilitating dispute resolution and redress and monitoring markets;
6. *Recognizes* the important role of relevant stakeholders, as appropriate, with regard to consumer protection policies; welcomes the participation of consumer associations, civil society, business and industry representatives and academia in the deliberations of the sessions of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Consumer Protection Law and Policy; and encourages these participants to present written papers and submissions in advance of the sessions;
7. *Encourages* the continuation of the information-gathering process on the legal and institutional framework for consumer protection, including in particular the development of the UNCTAD world consumer protection map; and invites all member States to participate in its completion and update;

8. *Emphasizes* the importance of regional cooperation in the enforcement of consumer protection law and policy; invites consumer protection authorities to strengthen their national legislative frameworks for international, regional and bilateral cooperation, in the light of guidelines 79 to 94; and requests the UNCTAD secretariat to continue to explore, gather and promote best practices for international cooperation;
9. *Welcomes* the initiatives carried out by individual member States, UNCTAD and other organizations and networks in building capacity and strengthening institutions in the area of consumer protection; and calls upon all interested parties to work together and identify and strengthen synergies;
10. *Decides* to renew the mandate of the informal working group on consumer protection in e-commerce, to continue work on new and emerging technologies, particularly artificial intelligence, and their impact on consumers, especially vulnerable consumers, aimed at producing accessible outputs such as technical notes to assist less experienced consumer agencies, calling upon member States to continue to populate the generic email list as a key contribution to the working group, and to report to the Ninth United Nations Conference to Review All Aspects of the Set of Multilaterally Agreed Equitable Principles and Rules for the Control of Restrictive Business Practices;
11. *Decides* to continue the mandate of the informal working group on consumer product safety until the Ninth United Nations Conference to Review All Aspects of the Set, to continue work on strengthening consumer product safety frameworks at the regional and national levels and improving international cooperation to protect consumers from hazards to their health and safety, to pursue consultations leading to a resolution on general consumer product safety, to pursue the development of a model law for the implementation of the recommendation on preventing the cross-border distribution of known unsafe consumer products and to report to the Ninth United Nations Conference to Review All Aspects of the Set;
12. *Decides* to renew the mandate of the informal working group on consumer protection and gender, to continue work on encouraging the incorporation of a gender perspective into consumer protection at the international, regional and national levels by advancing a gender-inclusive consumer protection checklist and on encouraging and sharing best practices and advance activities focused on advertising, consumer product safety and financial services and to report on its continued work to the Ninth United Nations Conference to Review All Aspects of the Set;
13. *Requests* the UNCTAD secretariat, in accordance with guideline 97 (b), to prepare a review of the implementation of the United Nations guidelines for consumer protection and of the work of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Consumer Protection Law and Policy for the Ninth United Nations Conference to Review All Aspects of the Set;
14. *Requests* the UNCTAD secretariat, in accordance with guideline 97 (b), to prepare reports and studies as background documentation for the Ninth United Nations Conference to Review All Aspects of the Set on the topic of maximizing synergies between competition and consumer protection policies;
15. *Requests* the UNCTAD secretariat to facilitate consultations and the exchange of views among member States on the topics of protecting and empowering consumers in the circular economy; and safeguarding and empowering consumers in the age of artificial intelligence;
16. *Requests* the UNCTAD secretariat to prepare, for the consideration of the Ninth United Nations Conference to Review All Aspects of the Set, an updated review of capacity-building in and technical assistance on consumer protection law and policy, including an impact assessment;
17. *Requests* the UNCTAD secretariat to continue to compile a list of contact persons of consumer protection authorities, to facilitate cooperation in accordance with guideline 87;

18. *Notes with appreciation* the voluntary financial and other contributions received from member States; invites member States to continue to assist UNCTAD on a voluntary basis in its capacity-building and technical cooperation activities by providing experts, training facilities and financial or other resources; and requests the UNCTAD secretariat to pursue capacity-building and technical cooperation activities, including training, and, where possible, to focus such activities on maximizing their impact in all interested countries.

*Closing plenary  
2 July 2024*

## **B. Other action taken by the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Consumer Protection Law and Policy**

1. **Report on the implementation of the United Nations guidelines for consumer protection by member States and relevant stakeholders; latest developments in legal and institutional frameworks: UNCTAD world consumer protection map; reports of the working groups on: (a) consumer product safety; (b) consumer protection in electronic commerce; (c) consumer protection and gender; enhancing the consumer movement: Means to facilitate the development of independent consumer groups; round table on protecting consumers as tourists; impact assessment of UNCTAD voluntary peer reviews of consumer protection law and policy; review of capacity-building in and technical assistance on consumer protection law and policy**  
(Agenda items 3–9)

1. At its closing plenary meeting, on 2 July 2024, the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Consumer Protection Law and Policy adopted a set of agreed conclusions (chapter I, section A).

2. **Report on the implementation of the United Nations guidelines for consumer protection by member States and relevant stakeholders**  
(Agenda item 3)

2. Also at its closing plenary meeting on 2 July 2024, the Intergovernmental Group of Experts welcomed the following declaration on cross-border dispute resolution and redress for consumers:

*The Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Consumer Protection Law and Policy,*

*Recalling* General Assembly resolution 70/186 of 22 December 2015 titled “Consumer protection”, adopting the revised United Nations guidelines for consumer protection,

*Recognizing* that consumers have an interest in the availability of effective dispute resolution and redress mechanisms, and in enjoying a level of protection for consumers using electronic commerce that is not less than that afforded in other forms of commerce,

*Recognizing* that effective policies aimed at providing dispute resolution and redress can improve consumer trust,

*Reaffirming* that member States should cooperate in the implementation of consumer protection policies to achieve greater results within existing resources,

*Recognizing* that many member States have taken important steps to develop and implement effective means of dispute resolution and redress, and to the extent possible within member States’ particular abilities and goals,

1. *Recommends* that member States implement policies, aligned with the United Nations guidelines for consumer protection and other international instruments, aimed at establishing effective mechanisms for consumer dispute resolution and redress, especially for cross-border cases;

2. *Encourages* member States to develop and implement mechanisms that address consumer cross-border transactions and disputes, and to foster international cooperation on this matter;
3. *Recommends* that member States raise awareness among businesses on the need to implement effective consumer dispute resolution systems, especially for cross-border cases;
4. *Invites* consumer groups to contribute to delivering cross-border consumer dispute resolution and redress mechanisms, and to work with Governments and businesses in their implementation;
5. *Recommends* that member States regularly exchange information on national policies and measures regarding consumer dispute resolution and redress, especially for cross-border cases;
6. *Also requests* that the UNCTAD secretariat prepare a proposal on how it could assist with the objectives above, considering resources needed and other issues that must be taken into account, and to present it to the Ninth United Nations Conference to Review All Aspects of the Set of Multilaterally Agreed Equitable Principles and Rules for the Control of Restrictive Business Practices.

## **II. Chair's summary**

### **A. Introduction**

1. The eighth session of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Consumer Protection Law and Policy was held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on 1 and 2 July 2024. Representatives from over 65 countries and seven intergovernmental organizations, including the heads of consumer protection authorities, as well as three non-governmental organizations, attended the high-level discussions.

### **B. Opening plenary**

2. The Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD opened the session. The following speakers made opening statements: the representative of Cambodia, speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China; the representative of Bangladesh, on behalf of the Asia-Pacific Group; the representative of the Niger, on behalf of the African Group; the representative of Nepal, on behalf of the least developed countries; and the representative of the Dominican Republic, on behalf of small island developing States.

3. In his opening remarks, the Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD stated that the present session followed the celebration of the sixtieth anniversary of UNCTAD and noted that, for six decades, UNCTAD had been at the forefront of promoting equitable and inclusive trade and development. Emphasizing the criticality of consumer protection in this regard, he highlighted the key role of consumers in economic policy, noting the need for effective consumer rights, to foster safe, healthy and inclusive markets. UNCTAD served as the focal point on consumer protection within the United Nations system and the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Consumer Protection Law and Policy provided the annual forum for multilateral consultations on matters related to the implementation of the United Nations guidelines for consumer protection, including on ensuring product safety, preventing unfair business practices and promoting sustainable consumption. The Deputy Secretary-General highlighted the challenges posed by globalization, digitalization and environmental degradation, stressing the need for international cooperation and sustainable practices as part of the way forward. Finally, the Deputy Secretary-General emphasized the need for collective efforts, to empower consumers, particularly vulnerable groups, thereby ensuring global prosperity through multilateralism and cooperation.

4. The keynote speaker, the Special Assistant to the Vice-Chancellor of Nelson Mandela University, South Africa, detailed the role of consumer protection in responding to global challenges. Consumers navigated a multifaceted world marked by rapid innovation

and extensive information, providing unparalleled choices, if robust regulatory protections were in place. However, too many consumers faced economic insecurity, disrupted supply chains and the triple planetary crises of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. The speaker stated that empowering consumers to take responsibility required instilling a sense of urgency and prioritization and encouraging consumers to make informed, sustainable choices, to achieve the long-term goals of peace, dignity, equality and a healthy planet.

5. The representatives of several regional groups commended UNCTAD efforts to improve consumer protection frameworks and capacities in developing countries, thereby contributing to overall welfare, market efficiency and social stability; and identified the voluntary peer reviews of consumer protection law and policy as a key tool for policy reform, which merited financial support from donor countries.

### **C. Report on the implementation of the United Nations guidelines for consumer protection by member States and relevant stakeholders**

(Agenda item 3)

6. In accordance with paragraph 97 (a) of the United Nations guidelines for consumer protection, the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Consumer Protection Law and Policy heard reports by member States and relevant stakeholders on the implementation of the guidelines. The panel was composed of the following: Director General, Directorate General for Competition, Consumer Protection and Fraud Repression, France; Executive Director, National Institute for the Protection of Consumer Rights, Dominican Republic; Chair, Competition Protection Commission, Armenia; and Counsel, Office of International Affairs, Federal Trade Commission, United States of America.

7. The first panellist highlighted the value of the United Nations guidelines in promoting fair and transparent commercial practices and informing policy decisions. The panellist noted that the consumer protection authority of France aimed to address digital and technological transitions, environmental sustainability, purchasing power protection, evolving consumer practices and global market needs.

8. The second panellist introduced a declaration on cross-border dispute resolution and redress for consumers, aimed at addressing the complexities of providing effective solutions for consumers dealing with foreign providers, particularly in e-commerce and travel.

9. The third panellist detailed efforts made in Armenia to align consumer protection legislation with United Nations guidelines and European Union standards. The panellist stated that consumer education, enforcement and international cooperation would be areas of strategic interventions in the near future.

10. The fourth panellist emphasized the importance of international cooperation in consumer protection. For example, the United States had concluded a multilateral memorandum of understanding with Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Peru, to address cross-border fraud. As the incoming president of the International Consumer Protection and Enforcement Network, the Federal Trade Commission planned to focus on cross-border cooperation, addressing digital consumer harm and sharing best practices.

### **D. Latest developments in legal and institutional frameworks: UNCTAD world consumer protection map**

(Agenda item 4)

11. The UNCTAD secretariat presented the UNCTAD world consumer protection map, which displayed information from 109 member States.<sup>3</sup> The website, open for submissions from all member States, aimed to provide an updated and comprehensive picture of the legal and institutional framework for consumer protection worldwide, identifying trends

<sup>3</sup> See <https://unctad.org/topic/competition-and-consumer-protection/consumer-protection-map>.

and challenges and informing discussions on future work. The website provided information on topics such as consumer product safety, dispute resolution, e-commerce, financial services and sustainable consumption.

**E. Reports of the working groups on: (a) consumer product safety; (b) consumer protection in electronic commerce; (c) consumer protection and gender**

(Agenda item 5)

12. The UNCTAD secretariat presented the reports of the informal working groups. Several experts detailed developments in these areas and welcomed the work carried out by UNCTAD. The panel of discussants was composed of the following: Deputy Commissioner, National Consumer Commission, South Africa; Deputy Director General, Digital Transformation, Justice and Consumers, European Commission; Director, Office of International Programmes, Consumer Product Safety Commission, United States; Analyst and Gender Implementation Adviser, Consumer Agency, Sweden; and Professor of Law, University of Reading, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

13. During the ensuing discussion, several delegates supported the renewal of the mandate of the informal working groups. A few delegates noted that gender equality was guaranteed by law and that support for vulnerable groups needed to be aligned with that principle. At its closing plenary meeting on 2 July 2024, the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Consumer Protection Law and Policy adopted agreed conclusions on this agenda item (see chapter I).

**F. Enhancing the consumer movement: Means to facilitate the development of independent consumer groups**

(Agenda item 6)

14. Under the agenda item, the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Consumer Protection Law and Policy held one round-table discussion. In opening the discussion, the UNCTAD secretariat presented the background document titled “Enhancing the consumer movement: Means to facilitate the development of independent consumer groups (TD/B/C.I/CPLP/39). The panel was composed of the following: Deputy Secretary for Consumer Defence, Argentina; Deputy Commissioner, National Consumer Commission, South Africa; Deputy Attorney for Legal Affairs, Federal Consumer Attorney, Mexico; Director, International Cooperation Office, Office of Competition and Consumer Protection, Poland; Director General, Consumers International; and Executive Director, Trainers of Youth Consumer Organizations, Association of Consumers, Chile.

15. The first panellist outlined efforts being made in Argentina in developing an independent consumer movement, noting the lack of a strong associational culture and the leading role of the Government in organization. One challenge was to ensure that consumer associations remained independent from businesses and political groups. The panellist stressed that, to ensure a long-term vision, sustainable funding models needed to be developed.

16. The second panellist detailed the legal framework in South Africa for the enhancement of independent consumer groups. Legal recognition of the role of consumer associations in providing advice, conducting research, promoting consumer rights, representing consumers in legal matters, offering dispute resolution and participating in relevant forums had been the foundation of their establishment and development. The panellist noted that the formal accreditation process ensured fairness and transparency in the relationship between the Government and consumer associations.

17. The third panellist noted the role of the Federal Consumer Attorney in promoting and supporting the consumer movement in Mexico, such as in facilitating training and providing advice, mechanisms for self-management and consultations. The panellist stated



that collaboration with consumer groups had yielded results in promoting consumer information, food labelling and collective redress.

18. The fourth panellist stressed that the Office of Competition and Consumer Protection in Poland recognized the importance of a multilayered and multi-stakeholder consumer protection system, through effective collaboration with consumer groups, as an integral part of consumer protection activities. This role was recognized in the consumer protection act. The panellist noted that public funding was available through project grants, particularly for those related to consumer information, education and counselling.

19. The fifth panellist shared data on the impact of meaningful collaboration between Governments and consumer groups, showing a correlation with higher economic growth. Two challenges in this regard were the adequate enforcement of consumer laws and the financial viability of consumer groups. For the latter, the panellist suggested business models based on leveraging insights and testing, legislation and digital tools. For example, Consumers International served as a platform for consumer groups worldwide, to share experiences and peer learning through different projects in the areas of vulnerable consumers, the digital economy and fair food pricing. Finally, the panellist identified opportunities for greater collaboration with UNCTAD and the United Nations Environment Programme, to raise visibility about consumer needs.

20. The sixth panellist emphasized the role of independent consumer advocacy groups in promoting economic growth and consumer rights. The benefits of such organizations included their ability to represent consumer interests, particularly in vulnerable areas, educate communities and advocate for legal and policy changes. The following main challenges were identified: encouraging the formation of consumer groups in countries that did not yet have them; providing financial and regulatory support to such groups; and ensuring collaboration between consumer organizations and government agencies. Finally, the panellist highlighted the importance of UNCTAD in supporting such efforts globally.

21. During the ensuing discussion, several delegates and a few experts emphasized the importance of developing a vibrant environment of civil society consumer organizations for the effective implementation of consumer policies; and that a strong and positive relationship between Governments and consumer groups was mutually beneficial, for which independence and complementarity were key. A few delegates shared the contributions made by consumer associations in the enforcement of consumer protection laws. One expert noted the need for the development of a toolkit to assist consumer associations in achieving financial independence. The panellists discussed the role of UNCTAD in assisting member States in protecting consumers and facilitating the establishment and development of independent consumer groups, noting that UNCTAD was well placed to conduct studies of benchmarking best practices and advise Governments on policy options, including legal and institutional reforms that could be conducive to greater participation by consumer groups in markets and policymaking and, in this regard, the organization of exchanges of experience and peer learning was identified as a cost-effective avenue for support, while international partnerships to enhance collaboration among consumer groups across borders was another possibility; UNCTAD could advise on legal frameworks, develop educational resources and strengthen international cooperation, to help enhance the autonomy of consumer groups, amplify their voices and improve consumer protection globally.

## **G. Round table on protecting consumers as tourists**

(Agenda item 7)

22. Under the agenda item, the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Consumer Protection Law and Policy held one round-table discussion. The UNCTAD secretariat opened the discussion. The panel was composed of the following: Director General, Directorate General for Competition, Consumer Protection and Fraud Repression, France; Chair, Competition and Consumer Agency, Georgia; Legal Counsel, World Tourism Organization; and Chair, Mumbai Grahak Panchayat, India.

23. The first panellist highlighted that the tourism sector represented nearly 8 per cent of the gross domestic product of France. The sector was particularly relevant with regard to the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games to be held in Paris in July–August. The priority of the Government was to ensure consumer confidence by prioritizing consumer information and law enforcement. For example, with regard to the protection of consumer interests, an online application allowed national and international tourists to report consumer issues in either English or French. Finally, the panellist stated that around 2,500 agents had been mobilized across the country to assist consumers and that social media channels aimed to reach both English and French speakers.

24. The second panellist detailed legislative experiences in Georgia in protecting consumers as tourists, in line with international best practices. Enforcement powers were shared by the National Tourism Administration and the Competition and Consumer Agency, depending on the subject matter. In addition, the panellist noted challenges in dealing with cross-border consumer disputes involving tourists, including travel and airline companies, which required coordination with foreign counterparts to address them effectively.

25. The third panellist noted that tourist consumers were particularly vulnerable due to language barriers, cultural differences, health and safety risks, misleading and unfair commercial practices, fraud and scams and the lack of effective dispute resolution and redress. The digital economy enhanced tourist access to services yet exacerbated consumers' vulnerabilities. The International Code for the Protection of Tourists developed by the World Tourism Organization based on the United Nations guidelines for consumer protection and the World Tourism Organization Framework Convention on Tourism Ethics, recommended that inexpensive and effective alternative dispute resolution mechanisms should be made available to consumers. Finally, the panellist encouraged member States to adhere to the Code and to pursue collaboration with UNCTAD in the protection of consumers as tourists.

26. The fourth panellist detailed the disruptions during the pandemic due to the high number of cancellations and the challenges consumers faced in obtaining compensation. The panellist referred to UNCTAD recommendations on protecting consumers as tourists during the pandemic and to legal discussions at the Supreme Court of India, based on the consumer protection act. Finally, the panellist suggested recommendations related to consumer costs beyond the price of a product or service, such as taxes and other implied costs; rules regarding check-in and check-out times; airport delays; online consumer dispute resolution; and sustainability in the tourism sector.

27. During the ensuing discussion, several delegates expressed support for the adoption of mechanisms to help solve cross-border disputes involving tourists and emphasized the need for effective dispute resolution and redress and adequate taxation and to address other implied costs borne by consumers.

## **H. Impact assessment of UNCTAD voluntary peer reviews of consumer protection law and policy**

(Agenda item 8)

28. Under the agenda item, the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Consumer Protection Law and Policy held one round-table discussion. In opening the discussion, the UNCTAD secretariat presented the background document on the impact assessment of UNCTAD voluntary peer reviews of consumer protection law and policy (TD/B/C.I/CPLP/40). The panel was composed of the following representatives of countries that had undergone voluntary peer reviews of consumer protection law and policy: National Director, National Consumer Service, Chile; Director, Fraud Repression and Litigation, Directorate General for Competition, Consumer Protection and Fraud Repression, Gabon; Chair, Institutional and Cooperation Commission, National Consumer Protection Agency, Indonesia; Head, Department for the Improvement of the Consumer Framework and Complaints Handling, Ministry of Industry, Trade and the Green and

Digital Economy, Morocco; and Director, International Cooperation Section Office, Consumer Protection Board, Thailand.

29. The first panellist stated that Chile had made significant progress following the peer review conducted in 2021, including legislative reforms and enhanced public service impacts, thereby strengthening consumer protection and international cooperation efforts. In 2022, Chile had issued a regulation on e-commerce, to enhance the normative framework for electronic platforms. In addition, since December 2021, the pro-consumer law had led to procedural and substantive improvements in consumer protection. Finally, with regard to impact assessment, the panellist noted that metrics for consumer satisfaction and opinion polls showed a high level of trust in the consumer protection agency.

30. The second panellist noted that the peer review had provided Indonesia with an internal benchmark against which to measure national laws, which helped enhance the national consumer protection framework, through knowledge-sharing, collaboration and policy reform. Key achievements included increased collaboration with local governments, improved training and education in consumer dispute resolution and new advocacy initiatives on consumer protection education in schools and universities. Despite challenges related to legal reform complexities, stakeholder coordination and budget constraints, Indonesia had made significant progress, successfully implementing 80 per cent of the recommendations.

31. The third panellist presented developments in Gabon on consumer policy following the peer review conducted in 2022. The review had highlighted the ongoing commitment of the public sector to consumer protection, demonstrated by the establishment of the consumer authority. Gabon did not yet have a dedicated consumer protection law, but the existing regulatory framework was based on the United Nations guidelines for consumer protection. Challenges included the complexity of legal reforms, stakeholder coordination and resource limitations. Gabon aimed to implement the UNCTAD technical assistance project, to strengthen the legal and institutional frameworks and build a competitive economy that integrated consumer protection.

32. The fourth panellist stated that the peer review had provided Morocco with insights from more experienced peers, leading to significant improvements in national consumer protection policies. A key achievement included the drafting of an amendment to the consumer protection law, enhancing the regulatory framework, and the review had contributed to enhanced collaboration with local stakeholders, training for consumer protection staff and awareness-raising campaigns. In addition, e-commerce regulation and dispute resolution were two areas that had significantly improved following the review, while remaining challenges included complexities with regard to legal reform and resource limitations. Finally, the panellist noted that, as recommended in the review, the consumer protection agency had joined the International Consumer Protection and Enforcement Network, which bolstered international cooperation efforts.

33. The fifth panellist noted that the peer review of Thailand had provided insights on dispute resolution and redress, identifying gaps and areas for improvement in consumer protection policies and facilitating collaboration among Government institutions, consumer associations and businesses. Innovations recommended by the reviewers that had been adopted, such as pre-mediation, allowed businesses to voluntarily participate in solving consumer complaints, thereby reducing the workload of the consumer protection agency and fostering better business and consumer relationships. For example, pre-mediation helped address around 40,000 cases annually, particularly in e-commerce and online travel services. The agency was extending this approach to all provinces in Thailand and integrating it with the consumer court system, to further enhance efficiency in consumer protection across the country.

34. During the ensuing discussion, one delegate shared experiences as a peer reviewer, noting that the reviews offered the following key opportunities: identifying areas for legal and institutional improvement; raising the profile of consumer protection on government agendas with UNCTAD support; and enabling a reflection on enforcement practices based on the experiences of more advanced authorities.

## **I. Review of capacity-building in and technical assistance on consumer protection law and policy**

(Agenda item 9)

35. Under the agenda item, the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Consumer Protection Law and Policy held one round-table discussion. In opening the discussion, the UNCTAD secretariat presented the background document on the review of capacity-building in and technical assistance on competition and consumer protection laws and policies (TD/B/C.I/CPLP/41–TD/B/C.I/CLP/76). The panel was composed of the following: Executive Director, National Institute for the Protection of Consumer Rights, Dominican Republic; Economics Affairs Officer, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia; Programme Management Officer, One Planet Network, United Nations Environment Programme.

36. The first panellist presented an overview of the thirteenth International Forum for Consumer Protection of the Competition and Consumer Protection Policies for Latin America programme, which focused on key consumer issues in Latin America, regional cooperation and the sharing of best practices. Topics included cross-border dispute resolution, strengthening consumer associations and regional cooperation, and discussions at the forum had informed the presidency of the Iberoamerican Forum of Consumer Protection Agencies by the Dominican Republic, leading to the formulation of the declaration on cross-border dispute resolution and redress for consumers. The panellist highlighted that the International Forum for Consumer Protection had emphasized the role of consumer associations in public policy and the need for coordinated regional actions to protect consumer rights, highlighting the importance of ongoing international collaboration.

37. The second panellist detailed the Arab Consumer Protection Forum co-organized with UNCTAD, aimed at enhancing consumer protection in Arab countries. She presented an overview of the situation in the region, noting that 18 countries had established consumer protection agencies. Finally, the panellist noted key initiatives of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, including the Arab Business Legislative Framework Report 2020–2023 and the Arab Legislation Portal.

38. The third panellist provided an overview of the One Planet Network consumer information for sustainable consumption and production programme, aimed at providing quality information on goods and services and engaging consumers in sustainable practices. She stated that the target was for companies to offer credible sustainability information on at least 50 per cent of products at the point of sale and noted key outcomes, including guidelines for product sustainability information and strategies to address greenwashing. Finally, the panellist highlighted ongoing cooperation with UNCTAD, including through a technical cooperation project on enhancing consumer protection in alignment with multilateral environmental agreements.

39. During the ensuing discussion, one delegate proposed a system for implementing capacity-building activities through a mentorship programme by more advanced countries.

## **J. Closing plenary**

40. One delegate emphasized that consumer product safety should be considered when defining the scope of the discussions and background documentation on the issues of the circular economy and artificial intelligence to be considered by the Ninth United Nations Conference to Review All Aspects of the Set. Another delegate suggested that the Conference consider declaring 15 March as world consumer rights day. One delegate noted the need to address the needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged consumers in public services.

### III. Organizational matters

#### A. Election of officers

(Agenda item 1)

41. At its opening plenary meeting on 1 July 2024, the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Consumer Protection Law and Policy elected Ms. Cynthia Zapata (Costa Rica) as its Chair and Ms. Yvonne Stein (Sweden) as its Vice-Chair-cum-Rapporteur.

#### B. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

(Agenda item 2)

42. Also at its opening plenary meeting on 1 July 2024, the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Consumer Protection Law and Policy adopted the provisional agenda of the session (TD/B/C.I/CPLP/38), as follows:

1. Election of officers.
2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work.
3. Report on the implementation of the United Nations guidelines for consumer protection by member States and relevant stakeholders.
4. Latest developments in legal and institutional frameworks: UNCTAD world consumer protection map.
5. Reports of the working groups on:
  - (a) Consumer product safety;
  - (b) Consumer protection in electronic commerce;
  - (c) Consumer protection and gender.
6. Enhancing the consumer movement: Means to facilitate the development of independent consumer groups.
7. Round table on protecting consumers as tourists.
8. Impact assessment of UNCTAD voluntary peer reviews of consumer protection law and policy.
9. Review of capacity-building in and technical assistance on consumer protection law and policy.
10. Provisional agenda of the Ninth United Nations Conference to Review All Aspects of the Set of Multilaterally Agreed Equitable Principles and Rules for the Control of Restrictive Business Practices.
11. Adoption of the report of the eighth session of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Consumer Protection Law and Policy.

#### C. Provisional agenda of the Ninth United Nations Conference to Review All Aspects of the Set of Multilaterally Agreed Equitable Principles and Rules for the Control of Restrictive Business Practices

(Agenda item 10)

43. At its closing plenary meeting on 2 July 2024, the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Consumer Protection Law and Policy approved the items related to consumer protection law and policy to be included on the provisional agenda of the Ninth United Nations Conference to Review All Aspects of the Set of Multilaterally Agreed Equitable Principles and Rules for the Control of Restrictive Business Practices (annex I).

**D. Adoption of the report of the eighth session of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Consumer Protection Law and Policy**

(Agenda item 11)

44. Also at its closing plenary meeting on 2 July 2024, the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Consumer Protection Law and Policy authorized the Vice-Chair-cum-Rapporteur, under the authority of the Chair, to finalize the report after the conclusion of the session.

## Annex I

### **Items related to consumer protection law and policy to be included on the provisional agenda of the Ninth United Nations Conference to Review All Aspects of the Set of Multilaterally Agreed Equitable Principles and Rules for the Control of Restrictive Business Practices**

1. Election of officers.
2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work.
3. Report on the implementation of the United Nations guidelines for consumer protection and of the work of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Consumer Protection Law and Policy.
4. Latest developments in legal and institutional frameworks: UNCTAD world consumer protection map.
5. Reports of the informal working groups on:
  - (a) Consumer product safety;
  - (b) Consumer protection in electronic commerce;
  - (c) Consumer protection and gender.
6. Proposals for the implementation of the declaration on cross-border dispute resolution and redress for consumers.
7. Maximizing synergies between competition and consumer protection policies.
8. Protecting and empowering consumers in the circular economy.
9. Safeguarding and empowering consumers in the age of artificial intelligence.
10. Voluntary peer review of consumer protection law and policy.\*
11. Review of capacity-building in and technical assistance on consumer protection law and policy.
12. Provisional agenda of the ninth session of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Consumer Protection Law and Policy.
13. Adoption of the report of the Ninth United Nations Conference to Review All Aspects of the Set of Multilaterally Agreed Equitable Principles and Rules for the Control of Restrictive Business Practices.

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\* Member State to be determined.

## Annex II

### Attendance\*\*

1. Representatives of the following States members of the Conference attended the session:

Antigua and Barbuda	Lebanon
Argentina	Libya
Armenia	Malaysia
Australia	Mauritius
Bahrain	Mexico
Bhutan	Morocco Nepal
Brazil	Nicaragua
Cambodia	Niger
Cameroon	Nigeria
Canada	Oman
Chile	Panama
China	Paraguay
Congo	Peru
Costa Rica	Poland
Côte d'Ivoire	Portugal
Democratic Republic of the Congo	Qatar
Dominican Republic	Republic of Korea
Egypt	Russian Federation
El Salvador	South Africa
Ethiopia	Spain
France	Sudan
Gabon	Sweden
Gambia	Switzerland
Georgia	Thailand
Germany	Togo
Greece	Türkiye
Honduras	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
Indonesia	United States of America
Iraq	Uruguay
Italy	Uzbekistan
Jamaica	Yemen
Japan	Zambia
Jordan	Zimbabwe
Kenya	

2. The following intergovernmental organizations were represented at the session:

Caribbean Community  
Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa  
Commonwealth Secretariat  
Economic Community of West African States  
Eurasian Economic Commission  
European Union  
West African Economic and Monetary Union

3. The following United Nations organs, bodies and programmes were represented at the session:

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific  
United Nations Environment Programme

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\*\* This attendance list contains registered participants. For the list of participants, see TD/B/C.I/CPLP/INF.8.



4. The following specialized agencies and related organizations were represented at the session:

World Tourism Organization  
World Bank Group

5. The following non-governmental organizations were represented at the session:

*General category*

Consumer Unity and Trust Society International  
Consumers International  
Global Traders Conference

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