Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Consumer Law and Policy

4th SESSION

8-9 July 2019

Room XVII, Palais des Nations, Geneva

Sustainable Consumption and Consumer Protection

Presentation by UNCTAD

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SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

- Interplay (1): sustainable consumption and the UN Agenda 2030 sustainable development goals (SDGs)
- Consumer protection laws: may lack specific provisions on sustainable consumption, but Consumer agencies are developing actions
- Policy Focus
- Some policy recommendations and areas for further discussion.
SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION AND CONSUMER PROTECTION (1)

- **Agenda 21**: Sustainable consumption entered the international policy discourse in 1992 at the Rio Earth Summit and its Agenda 21 action plan.

- **UNGCP first revision, 1999**: a new section on Sustainable Consumption (Section H of the 2015 version).

Goal 12 of 2030 Agenda (SDGs): aims at “doing more and better with less”.
This includes **educating consumers** on sustainable consumption and lifestyles, providing them with adequate information through standards and labels and engaging in sustainable public procurement, among others.

**Businesses** can also design solutions that can both enable and inspire individuals to lead more sustainable lifestyles, reducing impacts and improving well-being.
SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION AND CONSUMER PROTECTION (2)

- **Guidelines 49 to 62 (UNGCP):** seek to address the impact of consumption habits to the environment and their negative effect on existing resources.

- "**Sustainable consumption** includes meeting the needs of present and future generations for goods and services in ways that are economically, socially and environmentally sustainable" (GL 49).

- Subject of **shared responsibility** between member States, businesses, consumer associations, environmental organizations. Consumers’ right to be informed.

- **Policy-making in partnership with all relevant stakeholders:** a mix of measures and tools is necessary; national and international standards are encouraged.
SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION AND CONSUMER PROTECTION (3)

- Need for **appropriate** regulatory mechanisms.
- Product and services **safety-related** concerns.
- **Business** are encouraged to **develop new environmentally sound products and services** and new technologies.
- Need for **indicators, methodologies and databases** for measuring progress towards sustainable consumption.
- Leading example of **sustainable practices** by member States and international organizations in procurement policies.
- Need for **member States and relevant stakeholders’ research** on consumer behavior related to environmental damage.
POLICY OPTIONS (1)

- Consumer protection policy:

  - Legal framework:
    
    i) Specific provisions to inform and empower consumers;
    
    ii) Engagement with relevant stakeholders in policy-making and awareness-raising and education initiatives;
    
    iii) Encouragement of business action, namely through self-regulatory initiatives;
    
    iv) Promotion of standards for increased safety and environmentally sounder products and services.
POLICY OPTIONS (2)

- Consumer Protection policy - 2 important avenues to promote sustainable consumption are:
  - Consumer education
  - Business guidance
- Use of existing consumer protection provisions to promote sustainable consumption: tackling environmental marketing claims in the context of the advertising framework
EXPERIENCES OF MEMBER STATES AND QUESTIONS

- Examples of promoting sustainable consumption through consumer policy
  - Food loss and waste
  - Recycling
  - Environmental claims.

- Areas for discussion and further work:

- Part H of UNGCP on sustainable consumption; making it live in national laws of member States. Readiness?

- International cooperation; coordination of UN agencies and other international organizations to better sustainable consumption

- Best practices in this area from Governments, NGOs and the private sector
THANK YOU

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