



**Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Competition Law and Policy**

14<sup>th</sup> Session, 8 to 10 July 2014, Geneva, Switzerland

**Round Table on "The benefit of competition policy for consumers"**

**Tuesday 8 July 2014 (11:30 - 13:00)**  
**Palais des Nations, Room XVIII (First Floor)**

Both competition and consumer policies aim to enhance consumer well-being by ensuring that markets function effectively and correcting market failures. They approach this goal from different perspectives. Competition policy addresses the supply side of the market and aims to ensure that consumers have adequate and affordable choices, while consumer policy tackles demand side issues and aims to ensure that consumers can exercise those choices effectively. Competition policy can benefit consumers through law enforcement and advocacy. Nevertheless, competition policy alone may not be sufficient and needs to be complemented with consumer policy, and appropriate regulation in relevant sectors in addressing consumer concerns. Policy coordination between competition and consumer agencies is crucial in addressing the source of market failures and choosing appropriate policy measures. Furthermore, there is a need for coherence between competition and consumer policies and regulatory policies to enhance consumer welfare, especially in public utilities in the post-liberalization period. Even when there is competition, appropriate regulatory frameworks are in place and consumers are informed about products and services, consumers do not always choose the best option. Switching costs and the complexity products and pricing may contribute to this outcome. Switching costs affect competition and consumers. Therefore governments and regulators need to understand switching costs in order to be able to promote competition effectively. Competition authorities and sector regulators may take necessary measures to avoid harm to consumers. Consumer empowerment and competition advocacy are powerful tools to help consumers make informed decisions and to ensure that competition benefits consumers. The secretariat background note<sup>1</sup> provides case examples of law enforcement and advocacy from various jurisdictions to demonstrate the benefit of competition policy for consumers.

To facilitate this round table discussion, the secretariat note raises the following issues for discussion:

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<sup>1</sup> UNCTAD (2014). The benefit of competition policy for consumers (TD/B/C.I/CLP/27) available at <http://unctad.org/en/pages/MeetingDetails.aspx?meetingid=440>.

(a) The importance of independence of competition and consumer authorities in ensuring effective enforcement and advocacy for the benefit of consumers and avoiding the risk of capture;

(b) Policy measures necessary to ensure that liberalization of formerly monopolistic markets triggers competition and benefits consumers;

(c) The importance of coherence between competition, consumer protection and regulation in promoting and protecting consumers' interests and the role of competition authorities in ensuring policy coherence;

(d) Ways to enhance policy coordination between competition and consumer protection authorities; the advantages and disadvantages of having a single agency responsible for enforcing both competition and consumer protection laws; whether institutional setting matters for effective policy coordination and delivery.

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### WORK PROGRAMME

**11:30 to 11:35**

**Presentation by UNCTAD Secretariat**

**11:35 to 11:50**

**Keynote speech**

Prof. Caron Beaton-Wells, University of Melbourne, Australia

**11:50 to 12:20**

**Panel discussion (Part I)**

#### Panellists

- Anita Vegter, Board Member, Authority for Consumers and Markets of The Netherlands
- Joseph Wilson, Chairman, Competition Commission of Pakistan
- Alejandro Castañeda Sabido, Commissioner, Federal Economic Competition Commission of Mexico

**12:20 to 13:00**

**Interactive debate (Part II)**

The panel discussion will be followed by interactive debate, including interventions by:

- China
- Peru
- Spain
- UK
- Ukraine
- USA
- Zambia
- CUTS

*(List of participants to be completed).*

Delegates wishing to speak during the session are invited to inform the UNCTAD secretariat accordingly by contacting Ms. Ebru Gokce ([ebru.gokce@unctad.org](mailto:ebru.gokce@unctad.org)).