



**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, 19–23 October 2020**

**Session on:
Implementation of the United Nations Guidelines for Consumer Protection (UNGCP)**

The General Assembly in its resolution 70/186 on Consumer Protection of 22 December 2015, adopted the revised UNGCP and requested the UNCTAD secretariat to review information on progress and experiences regarding the implementation of UNGCP and report to the General Assembly on the subject on the occasion of 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 (point 5). The revised UNGCP established an Intergovernmental group of experts (IGE) on consumer protection law and policy under the auspices of UNCTAD to serve as international institutional machinery for the UNGCP.

In this line, the fourth session of the IGE on consumer protection law and policy, held in July 2019, requested the UNCTAD secretariat to prepare background documentation on the implementation of UNGCP (as requested in resolution 70/186, in particular on the legal and institutional framework for consumer protection and work programme of the IGE 2016-2020).

The need to protect consumers was heightened during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown due to increase of unfair commercial practices by business as the crisis unfolded. Consumers faced practices such as price gouging and hoarding, online scams and misleading claims, pushing consumer agencies to undertake quick enforcement actions and to reach out to online platforms to cooperate. Consumer agencies also had to strongly defend consumers' right to refunds for cancellation of services, particularly urging airline companies to respect consumers' rights regarding the flight cancellations.

This note by the UNCTAD secretariat reviews the implementation of UNGCP by member States and other relevant organizations since the 2015 revision. In particular, it reviews the national, regional and international implementation of the UNGCP in five selected areas, most of which were then added or amended, such as the principles for good business practices (chapter IV); consumer education and information programmes (chapter V, section G); electronic commerce (chapter V, section I); financial services (chapter V, section j); and measures relating to specific areas, covering especially water and energy (chapter V, section K, points 72 and 76). The note then reports on the implementation of the work programme of the IGE from 2016 to 2020 and concludes by proposing areas for future work and questions for discussion.

The panel discussion will focus on (a) what are the emerging challenges in consumer protection; (b) what areas of the UNGCP need further discussion and implementation; (c) how can resources be mobilized to implement the UNGCP and UNCTAD's mandate on consumer protection.

Implementation of the United Nations Guidelines for Consumer Protection

Friday, 23 October (10:00 – 10:30)
Palais des Nations, Room XIX (Third Floor)

10:00 - 10:05 Presentation of the UNCTAD Secretariat

10:05 - 10:20 Panel Discussion

Speakers:

- Mr. Omar Al Suhaibani, Deputy Minister for Consumer Protection, Ministry of Commerce, Saudi Arabia.
- Mr. Francis Kariuki, Director General, Competition Authority of Kenya
- Mr. Sebastian Barocelli, National Director for Consumer Protection, Ministry of Productive Development, Argentina

10:20 - 10:25 General Discussion

10:25 – 10:30 Closing

Delegates who would like to speak during the session are invited to inform the UNCTAD secretariat by contacting Ms. Hyejong Kwon (Hyejong.kwon@un.org) and/or Mrs. Elizabeth Gachuri (Elizabeth.gachuri@unctad.org).