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Revealing consumer protection in multilateral environmental agreements

25 April 2024

14:00 – 15:30 (CET Geneva time) online

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In an era where environmental consciousness is not just a choice but a necessity, understanding the implications of major environmental agreements becomes crucial for consumer protection authorities, who are eager to empower consumers in transitioning to an environmentally sustainable economy. This expert panel discussion delves into the impact that some major multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) have on consumers' lives and their broader implications for various interested parties. Such agreements include the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade, and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants. They also include the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

The Basel, Rotterdam, and Stockholm Conventions collectively address critical aspects of hazardous chemicals and waste management. Their influence on product safety, waste handling, and the reduction of harmful substances directly affects consumer health and safety. For consumer protection authorities and groups, these agreements provide a framework to advocate for safer products and practices. Businesses, meanwhile, must adapt to comply with these global standards, affecting everything from supply chain management to product design.

The Convention on Biological Diversity goes beyond mere conservation, impacting how biological resources are used and shared. Consumers increasingly encounter products derived from these resources, raising questions about sustainability and ethical sourcing. This convention is a guiding force for businesses in developing sustainable practices, and for academia in researching biodiversity's role in consumer goods.



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Finally, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change requires that consumers are increasingly empowered to make choices that contribute to climate change mitigation. Consumer protection tools, such as eco-labeling, transparency in carbon footprint reporting, and green certification, play a critical role in this process. These tools not only inform consumers about the environmental impact of their purchases but also drive companies to adopt greener practices to meet consumer demand.

This expert discussion will provide a multifaceted perspective, exploring how these agreements influence consumers lives, shape business practices, guide governmental policies, and stimulate academic research. It is an essential conversation for anyone vested in the sustainable future of our planet.

The event is part of the UNEP-UNCTAD project entitled: “Advancing consumer information and consumer protection in alignment with MEAs through a synergistic partnership between UNEP and UNCTAD.”

Purpose of this event

The event aims to map the interaction between multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs= and consumer protection, the implications of MEAs in consumers lives and market trends, and the policy implications for empowering consumers in sustainable consumption.

Key objectives:

- Reveal the impact that selected MEAs hosted by UNEP (the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions and the Convention on Biological Diversity)) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change have on consumers lives and their implications for all interested stakeholders: consumer protection governmental authorities, consumer groups, businesses, and the academia.
- Explore the ways in which consumer protection initiatives (regulations, education and information campaigns, dispute resolution and redress mechanism, enforcement, and international cooperation) can support the full implementation of the said treaties.
- Collect information for the drafting by UNCTAD of a Guidance note on the role of consumer information in addressing the MEAs.

Participants and targeted audience:



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The event targets UNEP (One Planet Network and MEAs Secretariats) and UNCTAD secretariat, policymakers in developed and developing countries, as well as academics and other stakeholders such as civil society organizations, activists and scholars.