

UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD) informal Working Group on Consumer Protection in E-commerce

2024 – 2025 Work Plan

1. Background information

As contained in its Agreed Conclusions, the seventh session of the Intergovernmental group of experts on consumer protection law and policy (IGE) (TD/B/C.I/CPLP/42, forthcoming), held on 1 and 2 July 2024, decided the following regarding e-commerce and the mandate of this informal working group:

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 [...]

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;

[...]

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;

Moreover, the Report of the WGE to the eighth session of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Consumer Protection¹ suggests the following possible work areas and strategies for 2024-2025:

- To deepen the insights rising from the technical notes, the WGE proposes to:
 - Address risks posed by AI to consumers and develop principles or checklists for enforcement authorities and/or businesses.

¹ See [Report of the WGE to the eighth session of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Consumer Protection](#), June 2024.

- Explore technology transfer among consumer protection agencies.
- Continue working on vulnerable consumers, focusing on a different vulnerable group.
- The WGE will continue using webinars and technical notes while ensuring that contributions avoid overlapping with other international networks and organizations.

2. WGE organization agreed at the first meeting of the WGE on 3 October 2024

Professor Riefa was confirmed to continue her role as the coordinator of the WGE for the upcoming working cycle. While the UNCTAD Secretariat will support Professor Riefa, it will remain the primary point of contact for interactions with member States.

Secretariat team and contact details: Elizabeth Gachui, Economic Affairs Officer (elizabeth.gachui@un.org) and Valentina Rivas, Programme Management Officer (valentina.rivas@un.org)

3. Work Plan October 2024 – July 2025

Below is the schedule of WGE meetings and activities planned for the current work year. The secretariat will organize a total of four WGE online meetings between October 2024 and June 2025 to discuss, agree on and implement the work plan (light blue in the table below). Participants are strongly encouraged to contribute to the discussions by sharing their experiences and challenges they face and send written contributions (even if not able to participate in the meetings). This will help the Secretariat and the Steering group in delivering the outputs outlined in the work plan.

Additionally, the Secretariat will host two webinars led by the consumer protection agencies in charge of each topic. Upon request, the Secretariat could also host meetings for the Steering group to discuss proposals and prepare the outcomes and reports to be put to the WGE for approval.

Additionally, UNCTAD will organize a roundtable on AI and Consumer Protection at 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 that will take place in July 2025 in Geneva, Switzerland. This will be an opportunity to showcase the ongoing work of the informal working group and share best practices with UNCTAD member States.

4. Topics and proposed outcomes

The WGE has clearly defined two main areas of work: AI and vulnerable consumers in e-commerce.

The topic of AI will be led by El Salvador and Poland. The WGE proposed the development of an AI checklist for enforcement authorities and a webinar on AI and consumer protection. This will allow to consolidate the work done with the technical note on the use of AI by consumers and in consumer enforcement.

The topic of vulnerable consumers will be led by Sweden. The Secretariat circulated a mini survey to determine the specific focus. The results indicated a strong interest in exploring the implications of technologies on vulnerable consumers, particularly relating to a specific group which is children and young adults.

Therefore, the WGE recommends the following outputs this year:

- 1 webinar on AI for consumer protection enforcement authorities (led by El Salvador and Poland)
- 1 webinar on the impact of technologies on vulnerable consumers (led by Sweden)
- 1 checklist for enforcement authorities using AI (led by El Salvador and Poland)
- 1 report based on the experiences and conclusions of the webinar on the impact of technology on vulnerable groups (led by the Secretariat in cooperation with Sweden)

Proposed schedule for WGE meetings/webinars 2024-2025:

Dates	Subject
3 October 2024	First WGE meeting. Mandate and workplan
23 January 2025	Meeting of the Steering group
20 Feb 2025	Webinar 1 on AI for consumer protection enforcement agencies
6 March 2025	Webinar 2 on the impact of technology on vulnerable consumers
27 March 2025	Meeting WGE to technically discuss outcomes
15 May 2025	Meeting WGE to prepare for the Review Conference
5 June 2025	Meeting WGE finalize outputs