Informal working group on consumer protection and gender equality: Proposed Work Plan 2026-2027

September 2026

I. Background

The 2025-2026 work plan focused on three broad priorities: exchanging national good practices, improving information on women and girls in the World Consumer Protection Map, and broadening participation in the Working Group. During the reporting period, the Group advanced a voluntary checklist intended to help consumer protection authorities incorporate a gender equality perspective into policy, enforcement, consumer education, data collection and cooperation. It also supported the collection of national experiences and ongoing research undertaken with UNCTAD's Trade, Gender and Development Programme.

It is suggested that the next phase moves from conceptual development to practical implementation, subject to the priorities agreed by the Working Group. It could consolidate and publish the Checklist for interested authorities to use as a practical, voluntary resource.

Digital markets and electronic commerce can treated as a cross-cutting dimension because they affect exposure to misleading practices, scams, dark patterns, information asymmetries and access to redress.

II. Overall objective

To support consumer protection authorities and related stakeholders in integrating a practical, evidence-based and context-sensitive gender equality perspective into consumer protection policies, enforcement, education, data systems and international cooperation.

III. Proposed workplan

Based on the work carried out in the past by the informal Working Group on Consumer Protection and Gender and the recent mandate received by the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Consumer Protection Law and Policy for 2026-2027,[1] the proposed workplan until the tenth session of the Intergovernmental group of experts (IGE) on consumer protection law and policy, to be held from 05 to 09, 2027 (to be confirmed), is as follows:

A. **Continue the practical development, use and dissemination of the voluntary checklist on consumer protection and gender equality.** The Working Group would continue the work on the voluntary checklist, with a view to making it a practical reference for consumer protection authorities and related bodies. Interested member States would be invited to share comments, examples and experiences on how the checklist can be used in practice, including policy design, enforcement, consumer education, data collection and institutional cooperation. Member States, could also, on a voluntary basis, test

[1] See (add reference 9th Intergovernmental Group of Experts meeting on Consumer Law and Policy , July 2026).

the Checklist in relation to an existing policy, enforcement activity, consumer education initiative or institutional practice and share lessons with the Group. On the basis of these contributions, the Group could also organize an exchange of experiences or a webinar and, if participants consider useful, prepare a short note on lessons from practical application. The Checklist would remain a voluntary asset, and its use would be adapted to different legal, institutional and market contexts.

B. **Develop practical evidence based on consumer protection and gender equality, including through the World Consumer Protection Map and related research.** The Working Group would continue collecting national and regional experiences and encourage member States to provide updated information relevant to the protection of women and girls in consumer law and policy. This work would support further integration of gender equality-related information into the World Consumer Protection Map and contribute to the research undertaken in cooperation with UNCTAD's Trade, Gender and Development Programme. The focus would be on collecting and organizing comparable information. Where useful, a common template could be considered to facilitate contributions. Subject to the interest and contributions of member States and the availability of data, possible outputs could include a short compilation of national practices, a summary of recurring approaches and evidence gaps, and updated gender-related information for the UNCTAD World Consumer Protection Map.

C. **Advance the exchange of experiences in the priority areas identified by the Working Group.**
Advertising, consumer product safety and financial services, which reflect priorities identified in previous Working Group discussions and the proposed renewed mandate, could be considered for particular attention, subject to confirmation or adjustment by participants. Discussions could examine how gender-related vulnerabilities and inequalities may arise in these areas and how consumer protection authorities have addressed them in practice. Digital markets and electronic commerce would remain a cross-cutting dimension, including online advertising, digital financial services, scams, dark patterns and other information asymmetries also considering the use of Artificial Intelligence. Depending on the interest and contributions of member States, possible outputs could include selected national or regional examples and short practical summaries of the consumer risks, policy or enforcement responses and transferable lessons identified in each thematic area.

D. **Promote cooperation and synergies with other relevant work within UNCTAD and, where appropriate, with the other informal working groups.**
Given the close links between gender equality, consumer product safety and consumer protection in electronic commerce, the Group could identify opportunities for joint exchanges or mutually reinforcing activities with the relevant informal working groups, while preserving their respective mandates. Cooperation between UNCTAD's Competition and Consumer Policies Branch

and the Trade, Gender and Development Programme would also continue, particularly in relation to research, dissemination and capacity-building activities.

E. **Continue broadening engagement and membership in the activities of the Informal Working Group.** The secretariat would continue encouraging the participation of interested member States and relevant stakeholders, with a view to broadening the geographical diversity of the Group and enriching the exchange of experiences. Participants would be encouraged to contribute national examples, practical tools, data and lessons learned, and to identify opportunities for voluntary support to activities agreed by the Group.

IV. Regularity of meetings

The Working Group will meet 3 times by July 2027, as follows:

01 October 2026	Review and approval of work plan; Confirmation and sequencing of thematic priorities, (advertising, e-commerce, product safety). Updates about the Checklist;
11 February 2027	Progress on Checklist; Exchange based on one of the thematic priorities) Upcoming International Women's Day and World Consumers' Rights Day (webinar)
20 May 2027	Exchange based on one of the thematic priorities) Review of possible outputs and lessons from the cycle; Preparation of materials for 2027 IGE report.

V. Outcomes

The secretariat would submit a written report and deliver an oral presentation on the discussions and activities of the Informal Working Group during the tenth session of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Consumer Protection Law and Policy.

The principal expected result of the 2026-2027 cycle would be the dissemination of the voluntary checklist (publication on the Informal working group webpage; submission as a contribution of member States); the results of the research on consumer protection and gender equality supported by examples from member States. The cycle also aims to generate further practical exchanges in the priority areas of advertising, consumer product safety and financial services (including in the Digital Economy and the challenges of Artificial Intelligence), strengthen gender-related information in the World Consumer Protection Map, and broaden participation in the Group.

All minutes and documentation of this working group will be made available to the dedicated UNCTAD webpage.