



UNCTAD

**The Report of the Working Group on Consumer Protection and Gender
to the seventh session of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Consumer Protection
Law and Policy**

June 2023

The [sixth session of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts \(IGE\) on Consumer Protection Law and Policy](#) held on 18 and 19 July 2022, reaffirmed "the fundamental role that consumer protection law and policy plays in the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, by ensuring access by consumers to essential goods and services, empowering consumers and protecting them from fraudulent and deceptive commercial practices and boosting consumer education to ensure more informed choices."¹

Furthermore, the Group requested the UNCTAD secretariat to establish a Working Group on Consumer Protection and Gender (WGCPG) "to highlight best practices, to facilitate information exchange and consultations, led and integrated by member States on a voluntary basis, without financial implications for the regular budget of the United Nations, and to report to the seventh session of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts."²

The purpose of the WGCPG is to provide a forum for member States' representatives and interested stakeholders to discuss the impact of gender on consumer issues, exchange experiences on different strategies and approaches to overcome challenges, and eventually draft policy recommendations and guidance on the matters identified in the Group's discussions, and a compilation of best practices on consumer protection and gender.

Since then, the WGCPG has held five online meetings. On 29 September 2022, the WGCPG participants discussed its concept note and adopted the programme of work until the seventh session of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Consumer Protection Law and Policy. The activities listed in the agreed workplan were implemented as follows:

1. **Preliminary research to identify the primary status and actions on consumer protection and gender in member States**: participants of the WGCPG were invited to answer the following questions: *What are the challenges you identify on consumer protection and Gender? Can you identify different impacts of gender on consumer relations in your country? Has your country developed strategies to tackle those challenges? Can you give examples of actions and policies? Are there any statistics on consumer protection and gender? (if yes, please share them)*. There were fifteen answers from member States, and contributions from the European Commission, Consumers International and the universities of Buenos Aires, Argentina (UBA) and Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil

¹ [TD/B/C.I/CPLP/32](#).

² Ibid.

(UFRGS). The challenge of obtaining data on consumer protection and gender issues was identified. Participants also highlighted the issues of: abusive (sexist) and misleading advertising, taxes and information on products and services, gender gap impacting consumers (education, wage, information, and access to justice gaps), vulnerable consumers (children, elderly, rural consumers), lack of sex-disaggregated data, unconscious biases within science-based programs, consumer product safety, women as consumers of primary products (head of households), financial issues (access to financial services and overindebtedness). Finally, participants supported integrating gender indicators in the [UNCTAD World Consumer Protection Map](#).

2. **Webinar on best practices and experiences on consumer protection and gender**: on 15 February 2023, the WGCPG agreed to host a webinar focused on consumer best practices in gender. On 3 May 2023, the protection held an extra meeting to discuss the first working group's webinar, which has held on 17 May 2023. The webinar hosted 3 panels on: *Harmful gender norms perpetuated in advertising*, *Product safety and inclusion by design*, and *Consumer Financial Issues*. 52 representatives from 42 countries participated in the event. The webinar also counted on the special participation of Ms. Simonetta Zarrilli, Chief of the Trade, Gender and Development Programme and Gender Focal Point at UNCTAD.

Following the webinar on best practices and experiences on consumer protection and gender, the WGCPG met one more time on 30 May 2023 to discuss the work carried out so far and the mandate to be proposed to the seventh session of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Consumer Protection Law and Policy.

In conclusion, the WGCPG agreed to propose to the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Consumer Protection Law and Policy that its mandate be extended for another year to continue work on consumer protection and gender in integrating the topic at the national, regional and international levels focused but not limited to advertising, financial issues and consumer product safety, and to explore the feasibility and potential of drafting a toolkit on consumer protection and gender matters.

All minutes and documentation of the WGCPG are available on the dedicated UNCTAD [webpage](#).