



UNCTAD

**The Report of the Working Group on Consumer Product Safety
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, decided to renew the mandate of the Working Group on Consumer Product Safety (WGCPS) “to continue work on strengthening consumer product safety frameworks at the regional and national levels and improving international cooperation to protect consumers from hazards to their health and safety, to further propose practical means for the implementation of the recommendation on preventing the cross-border distribution of known unsafe consumer products and to report on its continued work to the seventh session of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Consumer Protection Law and Policy.”¹

Since then, the WGCPS held six online meetings. On [20 September 2022](#), WGCPS participants discussed and adopted the workplan until the seventh session of Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Consumer Protection Law and Policy. The activities listed in the agreed workplan were implemented as follows:

1. **Practical means for the implementation of the recommendation on preventing the cross-border distribution of known unsafe consumer products:** the WGCPS considered a concept note on the drafting of a handbook or toolkit and a concept note on the development of a Model Law, both aimed at the implementation of the [Recommendation on preventing the cross-border distribution of known unsafe consumer products](#). The handbook or toolkit could provide practical examples of stand-alone measures to inform member States that do not have legislation providing specific measures intended to prevent the cross-border distribution of unsafe products. The Model Law could provide a reference for member States that do not have a legal framework from which they can address the cross-border distribution of unsafe products. Member States could use, modify, or adapt the model law as needed, with confidence that it was drafted, reviewed, and found beneficial for reference by the WGCPS and the Intergovernmental group of experts on consumer protection law and policy. The WGCPS proposed to seek support from a research institution to support the development of the Model Law.
2. **Joint European Commission-UNCTAD workshop** took place on 17 November 2022 and under the title “[Civil society and consumer product safety](#).” It was held within the International Product Safety Week, which hosted over 640 registered participants from 74

¹ [TD/B/C.I/CPLP/32](#).

countries. Ms. Pinuccia Contino, Head of the European Commission's Product Safety Unit and Ms. Teresa Moreira, Head of Competition and Consumer Policies Branch of gave the welcoming and closing remarks.

The first panel on 'Consumer organizations on the product safety's frontline,' stressed the importance for regulators and consumer organizations to collaborate closely in areas such as testing bodies, standards development, and regulation to ensure that the web of protection is woven as tightly as possible so that no consumer falls through it anywhere in the world. The second panel on 'The next generation of product safety ambassadors,' highlighted emerging issues, including the use of emerging technologies and misleading claims in social media. The second panel identified as priorities:

- a. Set up a youth advisory board that can meet periodically to synthesize current insights on consumer protection;
- b. Map out a product safety policy that can address the impact of e-commerce on general health and mental health for now and the future;
- c. Institutionalize child safety education for children, parents, and teachers so that it is carried out with stakeholders' engagement;
- d. Develop a social media communication strategy to increase safety awareness of the public on product safety.

The report of the meeting is available [online](#).

3. **Workshop on international trade and product safety**: took place on 18 April 2023 and featured a presentation by Mr. Christian Knebel, Economist at UNCTAD and expert on non-tariff measures in international trade. The workshop analyzed how the UNCTAD recommendation on preventing the cross-border distribution of known unsafe consumer products interacts with the wider international trading system. A free discussion followed on the interaction between product safety and trade policies. The recording of the meetings was shared with WGCPs participants.
4. **Workshop on product recalls**: took place on 4 May 2023 and featured presentations from Australia, Colombia, Peru, Sweden, and the United States. Recalls are corrective actions for instances in which products in markets are found to be unsafe for consumers and should be carried out quickly and effectively. Many countries have mandatory requirements or voluntary programs that offer guidance for suppliers to conduct product recalls. While many jurisdictions have a well-developed recall framework, others do not. The workshop presented the different models to conduct product recalls, exchanged experiences, identified good practices and challenges, and explored avenues for cross-border cooperation. The recording of the meetings was shared with WGCPs participants.

5. **Recommendation on general product safety**: The WGCPS considered a concept note for the development of a recommendation on general product safety, which could complement the United Nations Guidelines for Consumer Protection, to better assist interested member States in formulating and enforcing domestic and regional product safety laws, rules, and regulations. This could include general provisions related to the powers of product safety authorities, risk assessment or market surveillance. If adopted by 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 (2025), it could be submitted for consideration by the United Nations General Assembly.

In conclusion, the WGCPS agreed to propose to the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Consumer Protection Law and Policy that its mandate be extended for two years until 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 in 2025.

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