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**Minutes of 1st Meeting**  
**Working Group on Consumer Protection and Gender**  
**29 September 2022**

The Working Group on Consumer Protection and Gender held its first online meeting on 29 September 2022 (at 2 p.m. Geneva time). The objective of the meeting was to discuss the connecting points on consumer protection and gender and adopt the agenda for the period 2022-2023 until the seventh session of the Intergovernmental group of experts on consumer protection law and policy (July 2023).

**Background**

The Intergovernmental Group of Experts (IGE) on Consumer Protection Law and Policy in its sixth session of 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."

The IGE also welcomed the initiatives carried out by individual member States, UNCTAD and other organizations and networks in building capacity and strengthening institutions in the area of consumer protection; calling upon all interested parties to work together and identify and strengthen synergies. Furthermore, member States requested the UNCTAD secretariat to establish a working group on consumer protection and gender (para. 15 of the agreed conclusions of the IGE):

*"Requests the UNCTAD secretariat to convene a working group on consumer protection and gender 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"*

Based on previous [initiatives on the topic consumer protection](#), the UNCTAD secretariat circulated a concept note and an to be implemented from 2022 to 2023. The UNCTAD secretariat circulated the concept note before this first meeting and presented the agenda, followed by comments from participants as follows:

Canada expressed interest due to the connections between consumer health and safety and gender and asked about the time to be dedicated to this working group. The UNCTAD secretariat explained that the group would meet at least 4 times until July 2023 and that it is for the members to establish the working group's pace and extra meetings if needed; Argentina proposed questions to be circulated to gather information on the status of member States' consumer protection and gender issues and initiatives. Portugal (Direção Geral) expressed their interest in joining the group and highlighted the



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relevance of gender equality as a fundamental right enshrined in the Portuguese Constitution, and informed their mandate includes advertisement, a relevant topic for consumer protection and gender. United Kingdom CMA informed of the recent published guidance for fertility clinics and a guide for patients in the UK to ensure that they understand their obligations and rights under consumer law <sup>1</sup>. Sweden expressed the interest in joining the group and informed of the efforts in integrating gender equality in consumer policies such as a study to identify gender differences and how consumers use credits. Argentina suggested basic questions to be circulated among the participants and identify actions, policies and best practices that can be relevant for the group. Peru confirmed the participation in the working group highlighting the importance of the topic.

Professor Sebastian Barocelli from the University of Buenos Aires (UBA- Argentina) informed of a publication on a research about consumer protection and gender, including LGBTQ+) and mentioned initiatives such as the “Good Practices guide on Consumer Protection and Gender” and the Ibero-American Forum of Governmental Consumer authorities (FIAGC) recommendations on consumer protection and gender as good materials for reference. Professor Claudia Lima Marques from the University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS-Brazil), highlighted to topic of financial issues and overindebtedness. Professor Diogenes Carvalho, from the Federal University of Viçosa (Brazil) congratulated the work of this group and mentioned the importance of behavioural studies to the topic. Tanzania mentioned how crucial consumer protection and gender is and the correlation with product information. And suggested a discussion on enforcement and policy. Turkey raised the topic of representation as a result of gender gap.

Portugal and the United Kingdom asked to change the date for the April meeting in 2023 since clashing with other forums.

The UNCTAD secretariat invited participants to inform of all actions, publications and events related to consumer protection and gender, so that these can be disseminated within the working group.

Argentina informed of the upcoming webinar “Ciclo de Conversaciones sobre Género y consumo, Desafíos y avances en Iberoamérica”, in the ambit of the FIAGC activities, to take place next 3 and 4 October at 1 p.m. (Buenos Aires time). And the European Union also informed of a panel on gender and product safety in the framework of the International Product Safety Week (IPSW, 14-17 November 2023, focused on ‘New horizons for product safety’), bringing together brings together regulators, industry, consumer organisations, academics and other stakeholders from all around the world.

Participants agreed on the circulation of the following questions to identify the basic status and actions on consumer protection and gender in member States:

- *What are the challenges you identify on consumer protection and Gender? Can you identify different impacts of gender on consumer relations in your country?*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://statics.teams.cdn.office.net/evergreen-assets/safelinks/1/atp-safelinks.html>



- *Have you 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)*

The questions will be circulated for participants to answer until next meeting on the 18 November 2022.

### **Concept Plan and Agenda for the September 2022- June 2023 period**

The Working Group will meet every 2 months until the seventh session of the IGE (most probably in the first week July 2023), be as follows:

<b>Dates</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
29 September 2022	First Meeting. WG Agenda approval and connecting points: consumer protection and gender
17 November 2022	Second Meeting. Exchange of experiences. Proposals of recommendations
15 February 2023	Third Meeting. Business engagement: best practices and roles
26 April 2023	Fourth Meeting. Recommendations
30 May 2023	Last Meeting. Organization: presentation WG results at the IGE 7 <sup>th</sup> Session

More meetings may be called, if needed, upon request from participating member States.

### **Outcomes**

The secretariat will report orally the discussions of the WGCPS to the seventh session of the IGE.

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<b>Working Group on Consumer Protection and Gender</b>		
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Meeting – List of Participants</b>		
<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Country</b>
Vanina Ríos, Paola Rubín	Undersecretary for Actions for the Defense of Consumers	Argentina
Patricia Heffernan	Health Canada	Canada
Shihmin Hsi	Department of Consumer Protection	Chinese Taipei
Nataly Rojas Cuellar	Superintendence of Industry and Commerce - SIC	Colombia
Marta Thinnés	European Commission	
Andrea Zenisek	Hungarian Competition Authority	Hungary
Santa Buša	Ministry of Economics, Internal Market Department	Latvia
Nilavadi Chengan	Ministry of Commerce & Consumer Protection	Mauritius
Ximena Galicia	Federal Attorney for Consumers – PROFECO	Mexico
Carla Barata, Francisco Freitas	Directorate General for Consumers	Portugal
Alicia Vilca, Alicia González, Paolo Portal	National Institute for the Defence of Free Competition and the Protection of Intellectual Property - INDECOPI	Peru
Ewa Sikorska	Office of Competition and Consumer Protection - UOKiK	Poland
Dagobert Rugwio	Financial Sector Conduct and Consumer Protection Department of the National Bank	Rwanda
Caroline Hammarstedt, Emy Gustavsson	Swedish Consumer Agency	Sweden
Manop Pisetkul	Office of the Consumer Protection Board	Thailand
Magdalena Anthony Hall	Fair Competition Commission	Tanzania
Andrew Hadley	CMA	United Kingdom
Damla Yeşeren Arafal, Kutlu Köycü	Ministry of Trade	Turkey
Josephine Parmee	Consumers International	
Marta Thinnés	European Commission, DG Justice and Consumers	EU
Claudia Lima Marques	Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul	Brazil



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Sebastian Barocelli	University of Buenos Aires	Argentina
Diógenes Carvalho	Federal University of Viçosa	Brazil
Juan David Rico Polo		
Sergey Sinyakov	Eurasian Economic Commission	