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**Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Consumer Law and Policy**

4th SESSION

8-9 July 2019

Room XVII, Palais des Nations, Geneva

**Review of Capacity-Building and Technical Assistance on Consumer  
Protection Law and Policy**

**Presentation by UNCTAD**

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INTERGOVERNMENTAL GROUP OF EXPERTS ON  
**CONSUMER PROTECTION  
LAW AND POLICY**



# REVIEW OF CAPACITY-BUILDING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE ON CONSUMER PROTECTION LAW AND POLICY



# WHY IS UNCTAD THE BEST INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE IN DC, LDC AND EIT?

- UNCTAD is the focal point for consumer protection law and policy within the United Nations system
- The revised United Nations Guidelines for Consumer Protection adopted by the General Assembly through resolution 70/186 of 22 December 2015 encompass a chapter on international cooperation (VI. Guidelines 79 to 94), recommending member States to cooperate, to promote and facilitate capacity building.
- In the third session of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Consumer Protection Law and Policy , the UNCTAD secretariat was requested to present, at the fourth session, an updated review of capacity-building and technical assistance in consumer protection law and policy.



# WHAT IS UNCTAD'S STRATEGY?

- Strengthening of institutional capacities in consumer protection laws and policies, the formulation and enforcement of consumer protection rules, and the fostering of national and regional consumer protection policies in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, the Balkans, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Middle East and North Africa.
- The strategy focuses on the following aspects and issues:
  - a) Technical assistance for consumer protection policy and regulation;
  - b) An enabling environment for the private sector;
  - d) Expanded regional focus;
  - e) Follow-up and impact assessment of activities.
- For example, in the CEMAC project UNCTAD worked on the reform of consumer protection legislation proposing a directive that will harmonize the national legislations of the member States and thus establish a similar standard of protection in the region. This directive has been approved in April 2019.



# WHAT ACTIVITIES HAVE BEEN IMPLEMENTED?

**PROJECTS:** COMPAL PROGRAM (17 COUNTRIES OF LATIN AMERICA), MENA PROGRAM (7 COUNTRIES OF MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA), CENTRAL AFRICA (8 COUNTRIES) AND ASEAN COUNTRIES.

- **Legal and institutional framework:** reviewing the status of legislation and policy and setting up relevant institutions:
  - Validation of the directive on consumer protection for the CEMAC countries,
  - Peer review of Morocco,
  - Bhutan's Consumer Protection law through the provision of expert advice,
  - Support to Argentina in the revision of its consumer protection legislation, taking into consideration the revised United Nations Guidelines for Consumer Protection.
- **Strengthening human resources capacities** and implementing advocacy and awareness-raising activities: Beirut (Lebanon), Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic), Sao Tome & Principe, Bangui (Centro African Republic), Malabo (Guinea Ecuatorial) and Cape Verde.
- **Digital tools and market studies:** Knowledge management platform for the MENA countries and the virtual catalogue of the international best practices (INDECOPI)
- **Strengthening partnerships and furthering South–South cooperation:** Expert meetings, international and regional forums and partnerships.



## HOW TO ADAPT TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO THE NEW CHALLENGES OF THE DIGITAL ECONOMY?

- The rapid growth of electronic commerce and the development of new business models powered by large platforms are dramatically changing markets' structure and impacting on consumption patterns at a rapid pace
- It is necessary to combine competition, consumer protection and data protection policies to design measures and initiatives that take into account all aspects involved.
- The activities suggested to the authorities for the coming years are the following:
  - Training activities focused on the features of the digital economy and the evolution of new business forms for effective consumer protection;
  - Exchange of experiences and of staff to improve public policies on the basis of international best practices;
  - Studies for better understanding of the new markets, associating both public and private sector views;
  - New strategies for action with strong involvement of the private sector (new market players) and focusing on vulnerable and disadvantaged consumers;
  - Enhanced cooperation between agencies at regional and international levels through enforcement-related agreements and the development of common information systems (namely on product safety issues) for more effective action, as well as through internships of case-handlers and investigators
  - Education and capacity-building on the issue of sustainable consumption, which is a major concern for consumers and governments, interacting with national environmental authorities, business representatives and civil society organizations.

# HOW TO IMPLEMENT THIS MANDATE?

- **UNCTAD** relies on **voluntary contributions** to conduct capacity-building and technical assistance
- **Currently**, UNCTAD has more than **18 pending requests** for Technical Cooperation to assist DC, LDC and EiT to adapt their legislations, to strength the capacities of their staff and to advise and assist them in fully grasping the benefits that the digital economy can bring them.
- We ask member States and other partners who are interested in supporting capacity-building and technical assistance activities **to approach the UNCTAD secretariat** to explore avenues of cooperation
- **We count on your support!**





# THANK YOU

**Juan Luis Crucelegui**

Chief of Capacity building and Technical Assistance

Competition and Consumer Policies Branch

UNCTAD

[juanluis.crucelegui@un.org](mailto:juanluis.crucelegui@un.org)

