
UN trade & development
UNCTAD
Intergovernmental
Group of Experts on
Consumer Protection
Law and Policy
9th session
6–8 July 2026 - Palais des Nations - Geneva

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT

Intergovernmental Group of Experts on
Consumer Protection Law and Policy
9th session

Enforcement of consumer protection law in global markets, including digital tools and cross-border considerations

Monday, 6 July 2026
15:00 - 18:00, Room XII

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Effective enforcement under the United Nations Guidelines for Consumer Protection

- Clearly mandated and adequately resourced authorities (Guidelines 15, 86-88)
- National, regional and internation cooperation among enforcement bodies (Guidelined 79-94)
- Accessible dispute resolution and redress (Guidelines 37 – 41)
- Practical protection in digital and cross-border markets (Guidelines 5 (j), 63-65)

What has changed?

Digital and cross-border market dynamics

- Business e-commerce sales: US$27 trillion in 2022, +60% since 2016
- Consumers buy through platforms, apps, social media and online marketplaces
- Harmful practices can spread faster and across several jurisdictions
- Traders, consumers, evidence and platforms may be located in different countries

Enforcement implications

- Unclear jurisdiction and applicable law
- Difficulty identifying responsible traders
- Access to digital evidence and platform data
- Institutional fragmentation and coordination gaps
- Limited human, technical and financial resources

Need for stronger cross-border cooperation and information-sharing

Cooperation as an enforcement multiplier

Cross-border cooperation in e-commerce and in financial services

Category	*Total number of countries*	*Reported cooperation on e-commerce (percentage)*	*Reported cooperation on financial services (percentage)*
Participating countries	114	29.8	14.9
Developed countries	37	43.2	27.0
Developing countries	77	23.4	9.1

Source: UNCTAD.

- Cross-border cooperation in e-commerce remains uneven
- Reported cooperation: **43.2% of developed countries** and **23.4% of developing countries**
- Cooperation can support referrals, information-sharing, online sweeps and coordinated action
- Regional and international networks help authorities share methodologies and expertise
- Secure channels and trust among authorities are essential for effective digital enforcement

Digital tools and AI: opportunities

- **UNCTAD informal Working Group on Consumer protection in e-commerce** Technical note on Artificial Intelligence and Consumer Protection (2025)

- **Technology has the potential to transform enforcement** It can help authorities move from reactive to risk-based enforcement

  - Digital tools can support market monitoring
  - Data can help identify patterns of consumer harm
  - Technology can strengthen enforcement action
  - Digital systems can improve access to redress

Key messages for discussion

- **Strengthening enforcement in digital and globalized markets requires both innovation and safeguards**
- Clear mandates and adequate investigative powers
- Stronger national, regional and international cooperation
- Proportionate, dissuasive and effective remedies
- Responsible use of digital tools and AI
- Transparency, accountability, data governance and human oversight
- Capacity-building and peer learning, especially for developing countries

United Nations TD/B/C.I/CPLP/44

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

Distr.: General
24 April 2026

Original: English

Trade and Development Board
Trade and Development Commission
Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Consumer Protection Law and Policy
Ninth session
Geneva, 6–8 July 2026
Item 6 of the provisional agenda

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Summary

The effective enforcement of consumer protection law is essential in protecting consumer rights and supporting fair, inclusive and sustainable markets. As commerce increasingly takes place online and across borders, consumer confidence depends on fair treatment, reliable information and accessible redress mechanisms. Enforcement not only protects consumers from unfair, deceptive or unsafe practices, it also helps to promote responsible business conduct and market integrity. At the same time, digitalization has created new enforcement challenges. The speed and scale of digital markets, data-driven business models and cross-border transactions can strain traditional enforcement tools and institutional capacities, particularly among developing countries, requiring greater technical expertise, new investigative approaches and closer cooperation among authorities.

An overview of consumer protection law enforcement is provided in the present note, along with an examination of institutional arrangements; enforcement mechanisms; challenges arising in digital and cross-border markets; and the use of digital tools, to support enforcement activities and consumer dispute resolution. Based on this analysis, policy considerations are identified, to help ensure that consumer protection remains effective in increasingly interconnected markets.

GE.26-05991 (E)

Thank you

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