

**Intergovernmental Group of Experts on  
Consumer Protection Law and Policy, 9<sup>th</sup> session  
Room XII, Palais des Nations, Geneva  
6-8 July 2026**

***Agenda item 3: Report on the implementation of the United Nations  
guidelines for consumer protection by member States and relevant  
stakeholders***

**Statement**

***Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA)***

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Advancing Regional Integration  
through Competitive Markets  
and Empowered Consumers

## **DR WILLARD MWEMBA GENERAL STATEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GUIDELINES FOR CONSUMER PROTECTION**

### **TO BE DELIVERED AT THE NINTH (9<sup>TH</sup>) IGE ON CONSUMER PROTECTION**

- The COMESA Competition and Consumer Commission ('the Commission') amended its consumer protection law as contained in the COMESA Competition and Consumer Protection Regulations of 2025 which repealed and replaced the COMESA Competition Regulations of 2004.  
The repeal of the 2004 law was necessitated by its inadequacy to address a number of consumer issues and was inspired by the United Nations Guidelines for Consumer Protection (UNGCP) in addressing emerging and most challenging consumer concerns of contemporary times. The fundamental principles of the UNGCP like modernizing digital markets, ensuring consumer product safety, Financial Protection and Literacy, sustainable consumption and fostering international cooperation have been incorporated in our law, thanks to the UNGCP.
- The repeal and replacement of the Consumer Protection legal framework was necessitated by the need to have adequate investigative powers for effectively addressing cross border consumer protection challenges in the COMESA region and ensuring that the law has provisions that address many of the challenges faced by consumers.
- Some of these provisions related to unfair contract terms, mandatory and voluntary product recalls, product information and labelling requirements, false or misleading conduct related to dark patterns, supply of harmful digital content and the power of the Commission to recognise product safety or information standards.
- The 2025 Regulations have also recognised and expanded the United Nations consumer rights and made them justiciable. We are proud that the Commission is the first consumer authority in the world to make dark patterns a *per se* offence and among the very first few consumer authorities to legislate against certain production and disposal processes that harm the environment and by implication consumers.
- Since the amendments to the consumer protection law, the Commission's priorities include:
  - Putting in place systems that support consumer product safety enforcement in the region. In this regard, the Commission has started reviewing the existing legal frameworks on consumer product safety in the region with the aim of identifying gaps and propose amendments. The work on consumer product safety will lead to the Commission recognising some product information and safety standards that will be used in the region as well as set up a rapid alert

and early warning system for dangerous goods. For example, the new law is very clear that the Commission may recognise an internationally accepted standard as a consumer standard in order not to leave a gap in enforcement. In addition, the Commission continues to undertake enforcement action to protect consumers.

- In the line with the UNGSP, the Commission has revised and enhanced its legal framework to help protect children from harmful digital content as they are a vulnerable group of consumers. In this regard, the Commission is looking into this matter with the aim of developing a position paper for discussion with the Member States. The Commission's intention is to recommend to the Member States to adopt the age limit at which younger consumers should be exposed to digital platforms. This work is expected to finalise by the end of 2026.
  - Protecting consumers as they use digital platforms and online payment systems. The Commission continues to undertake enforcement action against undertakings in breach of the law. Among the issues of concern include lack of transparency in cross border financial transactions and disclosure of personal information for consumers. Currently, the Commission is investigating companies engaged in international money transfers for various violations.
  - International cooperation on consumer protection matters. In this regard, the Commission working with the United States Federal Trade Commission is spearheading the African Dialogue Forum. This is a Forum that brings together consumer protection authorities from around Africa beyond the COMESA Member States, with the aim of promoting sustained consumer protection engagements among African countries that are a united voice on consumer protection, and the need to further the integration agenda on the continent. The Forum held a meeting on 24 June 2026 where it adopted its operational framework. The forum is expected to be a platform where various reforms to national, continental and even international instruments through platforms like the IGE can be proposed.
- The Commission cannot overemphasise the importance of the United Nations Guidelines on consumer protection. These guidelines continue to play an important role in shaping consumer protection policies and laws globally. As already stated above, the Commission did in fact refer to these guidelines at the time of amending its own law to ensure that it takes into account international best practices while still being alive to the unique experiences of the region.
  - While still being very important, the Commission also of the view that the guidelines may have to be updated to take into account some of emerging issues in consumer protection, especially those relating to advances on technology such as Artificial Intelligence, influencer marketing among other vices.
  - The Commission nevertheless acknowledges the continued efforts by UNCTAD through the Competition and Consumer Policy Branch on the continuous engagements with the members on the many of these emerging issues in consumer protection and we reaffirm our commitment to support this cause.