

9th United Nations Conference on Competition and Consumer Protection
Room XIX, Palais des Nations
Geneva
7-11 July 2025

Concept Note
on
UN Commission on Consumer Protection

Contribution

Mr. Shirish V. Deshpande
Ms. Pooja Joshi Deshpande
Mr. Mumbai Grahak Panchayat
MGP-India

This material has been reproduced in the language and form as it was provided. The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of UN Trade and Development.



**Concept Note
on
UN Commission on Consumer Protection**

**For consideration
at
9th UN Conference
on
Competition & Consumer Protection
(7th to 11th July 2025)**

Submitted By:

Adv. Shirish V. Deshpande, Chairman – (MGP-India)

Email ids: 1) shirish50@yahoo.com ; 2) mpanchayat@gmail.com

&

Adv. Pooja Joshi Deshpande, Sr. Conciliator - (MGP-India)

Email ids: 1) adv.pooja.joshi@gmail.com ; 2) mpanchayat@gmail.com

Mumbai Grahak Panchayat - (MGP-India) :

Website : <https://www.mymgp.org>

Concept Note:

Title of the Proposal:

United Nations Commission on Consumer Protection (UNCoCP)

BACKGROUND:

The present UN Guidelines for Consumer Protection (UNGCP), which forms the basis of Consumer Protection Laws in several developing and under-developed countries, is an outcome of negotiations between Consumers International (then known as International Organization of Consumers Union- IOCU) and Economic & Social Council (ECOSOC) of United Nations. UN General Assembly passed these UN Guidelines for Consumer Protection through a Resolution of UN General Assembly on 9th April 1985. The said UNGCP were further expanded in 1999 by adding a Chapter on Sustainable Consumption. Subsequently the said UNGCP were reviewed and substantially revised through UN general Assembly Resolution dated 22nd December 2015.

It may be relevant to recall that there was a proposal made by MGP - India through Consumer International (CI) to set up UN Commission on Consumer Protection at the UNCTAD meeting held in Geneva in July 2013. As a result UNCTAD had set up a Working Group to examine the feasibility of the proposal and to recommend the modalities for the same. This ultimately resulted in creation of Intergovernmental Group of Expert on Consumer Protection (refer chapter VII, Clauses 95 to 99).

Although Inter Governmental Group of Expert (IGE) has functioned very well over last 9 years, keeping in mind the magnitude of challenges and the opportunities for consumer protection, it is time to revisit the proposal for setting up a permanent, full-fledged UN Commission on Consumer Protection.

WHY UN COMMISSION ON CONSUMER PROTECTION?

While the UN Guidelines for Consumer Protection (UNGCP) provide a framework for global consumer protection there is no dedicated International Commission tasked with monitoring, enforcement, redressal and capacity-building for this purpose. UN Commission on Consumer Protection (UNCoCP) is needed to uphold consumer rights, dignity, safety, and empowerment at a global level.

Consumer rights are fundamental to ensuring fairness, safety, and accountability in markets worldwide. In an increasingly globalized and digital economy, consumers are vulnerable to cross-border fraud, unsafe products, misleading advertisements, data breaches, and exploitative practices.

During last 10 years there have been significant changes in the market place, technology and consumer lifestyle which has resulted in new challenges to be addressed on consumer protection front. The revised UNGCP created Intergovernmental Group of Expert (IGE) as an oversight mechanism to monitor implementation of UNGCP among the member states, particularly in developing and underdeveloped economies. Against the backdrop of rapid digital transformation and globalization, the need for effective consumer protection and dispute redressal mechanism has become increasingly critical and urgent. According to UNCTAD's World Consumer Protection map only 38% of countries have established systems for resolving cross-border disputes while several consumer protection agencies facilitate cross-border dispute resolution on a case to case basis. Just 34% of economies have co-operation agreements, making it more challenging to pursue concerted efforts transnationally. Consumers in digital era, although reaping some benefits, are more vulnerable and insecure than ever before in view of increasing cybercrimes and deceptions. AI technology has emerged with unbelievable speed, unimaginable benefits but at the same time it has shaken the trust and confidence in the business and trade practices. This has posed major challenge before Consumer Protection Agencies all over the world.

At present there exists IGE for Consumer Protection. However, considering the magnitude, complexities and enormity of challenges, there is a strong felt need for UN Commission on Consumer Protection.

The idea of setting up a UN Commission to monitor implementation is neither something unheard of, nor totally new in the UN circles. There are several such UN Commissions on various issues. How they function, their composition etc. is given in **Annexure "A"**.

Objectives of the UNCoCP:

- I. Strengthen Global Consumer Protection Mechanism including legal framework and dispute resolution process.
- II. Ensure Equitable Access to Safe and Affordable Products and Services.

- III. Promote sustainable development and sustainable lifestyle.
- IV. Develop and Promote International Standards and Best Practices.
- V. Monitor and Respond to violations of Consumer Rights.
- VI. Enhance Global Co-operation and Capacity-building.
- VII. Collaborate and co-ordinate with various UN Agencies such as FAO, WHO, WTO, UNEP.

Proposed UN Commission on Consumer Protection:

The proposed UN Commission on Consumer Protection may be constituted on following lines:

Composition and Membership:

- The UNCoCp will operate under the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).
- **Composition:** 49 Member States + Permanent Representatives from Consumers International Representative (CI), Mumbai Grahak Panchayat (MGP) and International Consumer Protection and Enforcement (ICPEN). 49 Member States to be elected by the UNCTAD on the basis of geographical distribution for Africa, Asia, Middle East, Latin America, Caribbean, Western Europe, Eastern Europe & North America.
- **Tenure of Members:** Members may be elected for a period of 4 years. Each year 25% members will retire and new Member States will be elected in their place by UNCTAD. CI, MGP and ICPEN shall be nominated members with a permanent Seat in this Commission.

The Commission will have a Chairman to be elected by 49 Member States. The tenure of the Chairman may be for 2 years or for 4 years.

The Commission will have its own Secretariat with administrative support of a Secretary, 1 Officer in charge for each of the Geographical Regions mentioned above to oversee implementation of UNGCP in respective Regions.

- **Meeting Frequency:** The Commission should meet annually at least for 3 or 4 days.

- **Functions:** The Commission shall be responsible for:
 - a) Implementation of the revised UNGCP.
 - b) To receive reports on implementation of UNGCP from Member States
 - c) To share best practices adopted by Member States for implementation of UNGCP.
 - d) To assist and guide Member States who face difficulties in implementing certain Guidelines.
 - e) To guide and assist Member States to set up simple, speedy & inexpensive redressal of consumer grievances mechanism
 - f) To establish Global Online Dispute Resolution Mechanism for E-Commerce disputes.
 - g) To facilitate technical/legal assistance/expertise to Member States in legislating consumer laws where there is none.
 - h) To encourage Member States to recognize importance of and support the development of independent consumer groups in accordance with social, economic and environmental circumstances of the country and the needs of its population.
 - i) To collaborate with UN Agencies such as FAO, WHO, WTO, Interpol etc.
 - j) To co-ordinate and interact with Consumer Associations, NGOs, Academia, Research Institutes and Civil Society to create global consumer network.
 - k) To promote sustainable lifestyle by ensuring responsible production and consumption patterns and revitalizing global partnership for sustainable development.
 - l) To develop sectoral rights of consumers in different sectors.
 - m) To monitor abusive marketing practices causing consumer detriment and to recommend measures to curb them.
 - n) To provide technical assistance and training to regulators, enforcement agencies and consumer associations.
 - o) To recommend policy frameworks for effective implementation of UNGCP.
 - p) To ensure level-playing field for consumers in market place.
 - q) To Initiate empowerment actions/programmes for consumers
 - r) Periodic review/revision of UNGCP every 5 years.
 - s) To promote advocacy, awareness and capacity building on sustainable consumption, financial literacy, data privacy and digital commerce.

- t) To ensure access to basic needs of consumers at affordable prices.
- u) To ensure better quality of life for consumers across the world.

Expectations from UNCoCP:

- Promotion of and encouragement to fair and ethical business practices.
- Greater accountability in global business practices.
- Stronger legal framework and efficient consumer dispute redressal systems in Member states.
- Safer and fairer digital and physical marketplaces.
- Alignment with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- Empowered and informed consumers across the world.

Proposed Next Steps:

- UNCTAD to form a Working Group to examine feasibility of this proposal.
- Hold Global consultations with all stakeholders.
- Report responses and recommendations at next IGE in July 2026.



Chairman
MGP India

E mail: 1) mpanchayat@gmail.com 2) shirish50@yahoo.com

Dated: 5th June 2025

Annexure “A”

Some Functional Commissions of UN at a glance

Sr.	Commission	No. of Members	Meetings frequency/Duration Once a year in New York	Functions
1.	Commission Social Development (CSocD)	46 Members - Rotating Geographically allocated	Once a year In New York.	Advising the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and Govts on a wide range of social policy issues and on the social perspective of development. Follow-up & Implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action.
2.	Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)	45 Members Rotating, Geographically allocated.	Once a year for 10 days in New York.	Global policy-making for gender equality and advancement of women. Focus on one priority theme, based on the Beijing Platform for Action. Greater emphasis on Implementation and to evaluate progress of the agreed conclusions on a priority theme.
3.	Commission on Population and Development	47 Members Rotating, Geographically allocated.	Once a year for 10 days in New York.	Arranging for studies & advising the Council on population & development issues. Monitoring, reviewing & Implementation assessing of Programme of Action at national/regional/ global levels. Identifying reasons for success and failure. Providing appropriate recommendations.

4.	Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD)	53 Members Rotating, Geographi-cally allocated.	Once a year	The work of CSD is organized into two-year cycles: year 1-review session; and year 2-policy sessions. Objectives- Securing renewed political commitment to sustainable development. Assessing the progress and implementation gaps in meeting already agreed commitments. Addressing new and emerging challenges.
5.	Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR)- NOW UN Human Rights Council	47 Members Rotating, Geographi-cally allocated.	Three times a year, in March, June, and September.	To examine, monitor and publicly report on human rights situations in specific countries or territories and major phenomena of human rights violations worldwide.

These UN Commissions report directly to the General Assembly or to Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

Who are the members of such Commissions?

Generally 45-50 Member States of the United Nations serve as members of such Commission at any one time. These members are elected by ECOSOC. The Commission consists of one representative from each of the Member States elected by the Council on the basis of equitable geographical distribution: For example 13 members from Africa; 11 from Asia; 9 from Latin America and Caribbean; 8 from Western Europe and other States and 4 from Eastern Europe. Members are elected for a period of 3-4 years. Each year approximately a third of the seats of the Commission come up for election, and the representatives are appointed for a 3-4 year term.

Some of the Functional Commissions:

1. Commission on Human Rights
2. Commission on Science and Technology for
Development <http://stdev.unctad.org/unsystem/cstd/index.html>
3. Statistical Commission
4. United Nations Forum on Forests
5. Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal justice
6. Commission on Narcotic Drugs

Some of the Regional Commissions:

1. Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)
2. Economic Commission for Europe (ECE)
3. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)
4. Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)
5. Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)
