

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

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS**

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## SPEECH

### 9<sup>th</sup> United Nations Conference on Competition and Consumer Protection (UNCCCP)

#### Scene Setter

The 9<sup>th</sup> United Nations Conference on Competition and Consumer Protection (UNCCCP) will take place in Geneva on 7-9 July 2025. Your 10-minute intervention will take place on the first day of the conference on 7 July at 17:00, at the beginning of the session on the “**Report on the implementation of the United Nations guidelines for consumer protection and of the work of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Consumer Protection Law and Policy (Item 6-7)**”.

**The report evaluates the implementation of the guidelines since their latest revision in 2015, focusing on the following areas:** the digital economy; product safety; sustainable consumption; vulnerable and disadvantaged consumers; dispute resolution and redress; stakeholder engagement; and international cooperation.

The meeting will be chaired by the President of the Conference, H.E. Ms. Clara Delgado Jesus, Ambassador, Permanent Mission in Geneva of Cabo Verde.

Your keynote will be the beginning of the segment. You will be seated at the front row. Ms Delgado Jesus will welcome you and ask you to go to the podium (lectern) to deliver your 10-minute keynote speech. Once finished, you will be guided to your seat in the front row.

After this, the speakers of the panel will go on stage (there will be first a presentation by UNCTAD Secretariat (Arnau Izaguerri Vila), followed by a panel discussion including speakers from Thailand, Costa Rica, the Russian Federation and the Republic of Korea, in which you will not take part).

The audience will consist of high-level government officials (ministerial level), international and regional organisations working on competition and consumer protection, other stakeholders such as businesses, civil society organisations and academia.

The participation of DG JUST aims to demonstrate:

- 1/ the **commitment of the EU to multilateral cooperation with UNCTAD** in the context of a likely suspension of the work on consumer product safety due to budgetary constraints.
- 2/ strong **support to the adoption of a draft resolution on product safety**, which mirrors principles of our General Product Safety Regulation (GPSR) and will help countries adapt their framework and take action for consumer protection. The resolution is sponsored by Spain, Sweden, South Africa, Brazil and Costa Rica. DG JUST has been very active in the informal working group on product safety that has drafted the resolution.

A consultation on the draft resolution is planned during the conference on 9 July “Consultations on the draft resolution on product safety” in which Eva Sinkovic (JUST B4) will be a panellist (following the engagement as co-chair together with South Africa of the drafting committee of the resolution).

## **[Introduction]**

Excellencies, Distinguished guests

- It is an honour to join you today to reflect on the progress we have made to protect consumers in a rapidly changing world.

## **[Major challenges for consumer protection and recent results]**

- We are living in very challenging times. Global trade is slowing, geopolitical tensions are deepening, and technology is advancing like never before.
- As this Intergovernmental Group of Experts reflects in its work, the economic, social and environmental landscapes - including the digital revolution - have fundamentally changed how businesses operate and how consumers behave.
- These changes have blurred the lines between local and global markets.
- In Europe, we recognise the need to adapt to these shifts and accelerate growth, ultimately improving consumers’ living standards.
- The **European Commission’s priorities** for this mandate set clear objectives for **competitiveness, sustainable prosperity, democracy and social fairness**.
- An **ambitious consumer policy** is a central part of these efforts.

- Enhancing consumer protection creates a **fair competitive environment that benefits both consumers and businesses.**
- To respond, we are developing a forward-looking **Consumer Agenda for 2025-2030**, which will include an **action plan on consumers in the European Single Market.**
- Our focus will be on:
  - completing the **Single Market** for consumers,
  - improving **enforcement**,
  - strengthening **consumer protection and product safety online**,
  - protecting **vulnerable consumers**,
  - fostering **sustainable consumption**, and
  - Reducing administrative burden.
- Additionally, the agenda will aim at enhancing **international cooperation** on consumer issues and ensuring a **dynamic governance framework.**
- These priorities echo well the focus areas identified in the **Report on the implementation of UN guidelines for consumer protection.**
- **Multilateral cooperation** will remain at the forefront of the EU's strategy.
  - We have a unique position in the global marketplace by upholding high standards for consumer protection. And we will continue sharing best practices and encourage regulatory frameworks to strengthen consumer rights and safety.

## [Protecting Consumers in the Digital Age]

- Consumer practices have evolved. In light of this evolution and to ensure that consumers are well protected in the digital age, the EU is working on **adapting its legislation** to modern realities.
- Last year, the European Commission concluded a **thorough review** of key consumer law directives in the digital environment and found them generally effective.

### But there is room for improvement.

- The Commission concluded that more can be done to **protect consumers online, as well as to clarify and simplify rules for businesses to fully benefit from the EU Digital Single Market.**
- To achieve this, the Commission is working on a **Digital Fairness Act**, aiming to present targeted legislative measures in the second part 2026.
- Focus areas include:
  - **misleading dark patterns** in the design of websites and applications,
  - **addictive design** prompting consumers to spend more time and money online than intended,
  - **unfair personalisation practices** exploiting consumer vulnerabilities, and deceptive influencer marketing.
- Protecting vulnerable consumers, **especially children**, is at the core of the upcoming Digital Fairness Act.
- We are also prioritising **enforcement of consumer law** to address e-commerce challenges and today's consumer digital markets.

- Earlier this year, the Network of European Consumer Authorities (the CPC Network), coordinated by the Commission, launched **investigations against major marketplaces - Temu and SHEIN** - for manipulative design features, fake discounts and other practices.
  - Such illegal practices make often non-compliant products from third countries so attractive for consumers.
- These actions demonstrate how consumer protection rules and other regulatory frameworks – like the EU's the Digital Services Act (DSA) – must work together to enable fair competition in consumer markets.
- Other investigations involving leading market players in different sectors are on-going.
  - One such sector is **gaming and the protection of children**, where much more should be done.
  - Earlier this year, we published key principles on in-game virtual currencies to increase transparency and protect minors.
- But our enforcement experience shows the **need for stronger tools** to better protect consumers and shield compliant EU traders from unfair competition.
  - **Centralising direct enforcement powers** for certain widespread and systematic breaches at the EU-level is one solution that we are considering.
- Two weeks ago, the co-legislators agreed on the **review of the Alternative Dispute Resolution Directive** to make it fit for the digital age, cost-efficient, and ensure inclusive digital tools benefit of vulnerable consumers.

- Consumers will get customised assistance in cross-border disputes from newly introduced contact points.
- Also, more disputes can be resolved out-of-court through extended material and geographical scopes.
- A strong model of **Collective Redress** is also a priority.
- Effective redress opportunities are **complementary to public enforcement** and need to be supported not only in the European Union but across the globe.
- Thanks to the recent Representative Actions Directive, European consumer organisations will soon be able to seek redress for thousands - even millions - of consumers at once, including those harmed by dangerous products.
- Organisations like UNCTAD have a key role in promoting best practices in enforcement and redress and high consumer protection standards globally.
- The Commission stands ready to work with UNCTAD to promote out-of-court dispute resolution among third country traders wanting to maintain high reputations.
- Exchanging best practices could boost uptake of Alternative Dispute Resolution mechanisms among consumers and traders.

### **[Shared Challenges in Product Safety]**

- Concerning **product safety**, the urgency to address it has never been greater.

- The challenges we face are shared across borders, driven by the **globalisation of supply chains, booming e-commerce**, and persistent **gaps in regulatory frameworks**.
- In the EU, **cross-border e-commerce** has surged in the past two years, with more than one in four consumers now buying online from outside the EU.
  - Over 12 million small low-value items are **directly imported from outside the EU** daily.
  - The sheer **volume raises concerns** about our ability to ensure **all market products are safe for consumers**.
- The Safety Gate - our EU rapid alert system - has seen a sharp rise in dangerous product notifications from market surveillance authorities.
- To tackle this, the new **General Product Safety Regulation**, applicable since December last year, establishes new rules, especially for **online marketplaces**.
- We also see more online marketplaces ready to act on improving product safety through the **EU's Product Safety Pledge** initiative, launched in 2018 and renewed in 2023.
  - 12 online marketplaces have voluntarily committed to better detecting unsafe products and increasing consumer protection.
- **Thanks to UNCTAD's work, we see these are shared challenges.**
  - **Many countries lack comprehensive product safety laws** to tackle them, leaving millions of consumers vulnerable.



**[The Draft UNCTAD Resolution on product safety: A Critical Milestone]**

- In this context, the **draft resolution on consumer product safety** is for us **a critical milestone**.
  - **It stresses** the need for protecting consumers - including vulnerable and disadvantaged ones - in countries with less developed product safety frameworks.
  - **It calls** for Members to have in place strong regulatory frameworks ensuring all consumers have access to safe products.
- By adopting this resolution, we **will institutionalise best practices** and create a unified front against unsafe products.

**[Announcing a New Joint Initiative: The EU-UNCTAD Handbook and Training]**

- I am also proud to announce a new collaboration between the European Commission and UNCTAD.
- As mentioned in our annual work plan, we will work together on a joint Handbook and Training Programme on Consumer Product Safety.
  - This new project will produce a practical, policy-oriented guide for countries on how to build robust product safety frameworks.
  - This demonstrates our engagement to mobilise resources for product safety, and the work of UNCTAD on consumer protection.

**[Invitation to International Product Safety Week 2026]**

- We also want to create opportunities for continuous dialogue and exchanges on global consumer product safety.
  - I invite you then to save the date for the next **International Product Safety week**, which we will host in Brussels from 7-10 September 2026.

**[Conclusion]**

- These initiatives reflect our **shared commitment** to working with multilateral partners in favour of a **level playing field, ensuring all consumers, wherever they may be, are protected from harm.**
- Thank you.