

# 9th United Nations Conference on Competition and Consumer Protection

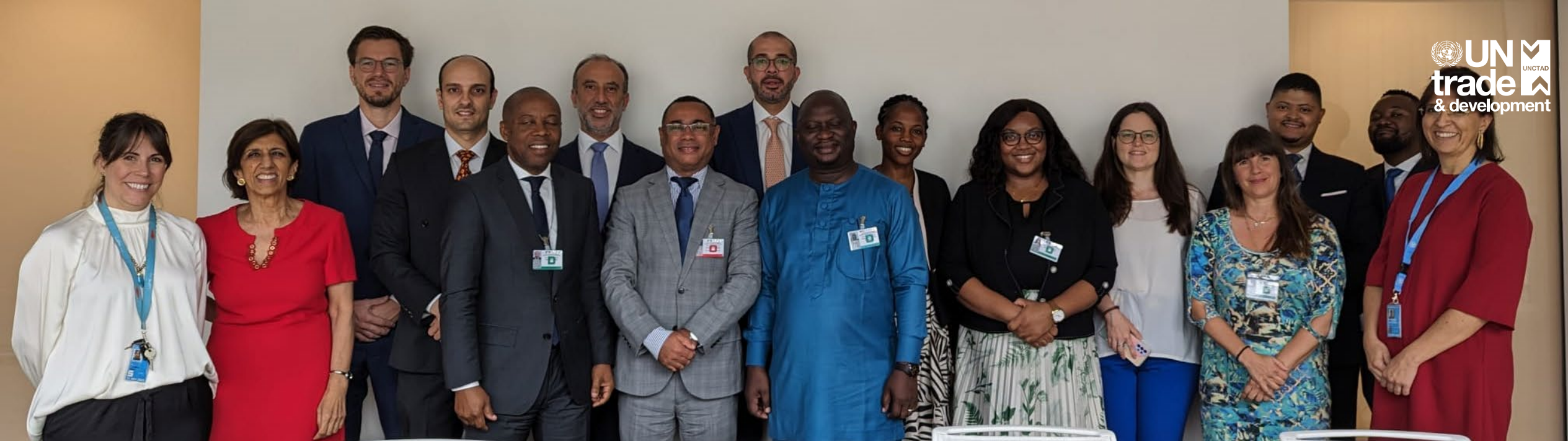
7–11 July 2025 - Palais des Nations - Geneva

# **Review of capacity -building in and technical assistance on consumer protection and competition law and policy**

Thursday, 10 July 2025

16:30 – 18:00, Room XIX





- UNCTAD provides capacity -building and technical assistance upon request and subject to available resources. Support includes legal drafting, institutional strengthening, and promoting cooperation between authorities.
- From 2020 to 2024, UNCTAD adapted its work to major global shifts —COVID-19 pandemic, digitalization, and growing focus on sustainability —by increasing virtual delivery and targeting new policy needs.



35 formal requests for  
cooperation received

2,600 + participants  
trained

91% satisfaction rate  
recorded

# ➤ National level activities



## Albania

- ▶ Fostering competition law and policy and competition culture in Albania.



## Bhutan

- ▶ Capacity -building to Competition and Consumer Affairs Authority to enhance competition and consumer protection enforcement.



## Democratic Republic of the Congo

- ▶ Assessed existing legislation and recommended institutional reforms and adoption of consumer protection law. Three-year road map.

# ➤ National activities

## 2020

- ▶ Belarus – competition legal assessment
- ▶ Morocco – competition and personal data
- ▶ Myanmar – state aid and competition
- ▶ Peru - hoarding and price gouging
- ▶ Uzbekistan – price regulation

## 2021 – 2022

- ▶ Barbados – merger guidelines
- ▶ Guatemala – public procurement
- ▶ Thailand – hospitality sector

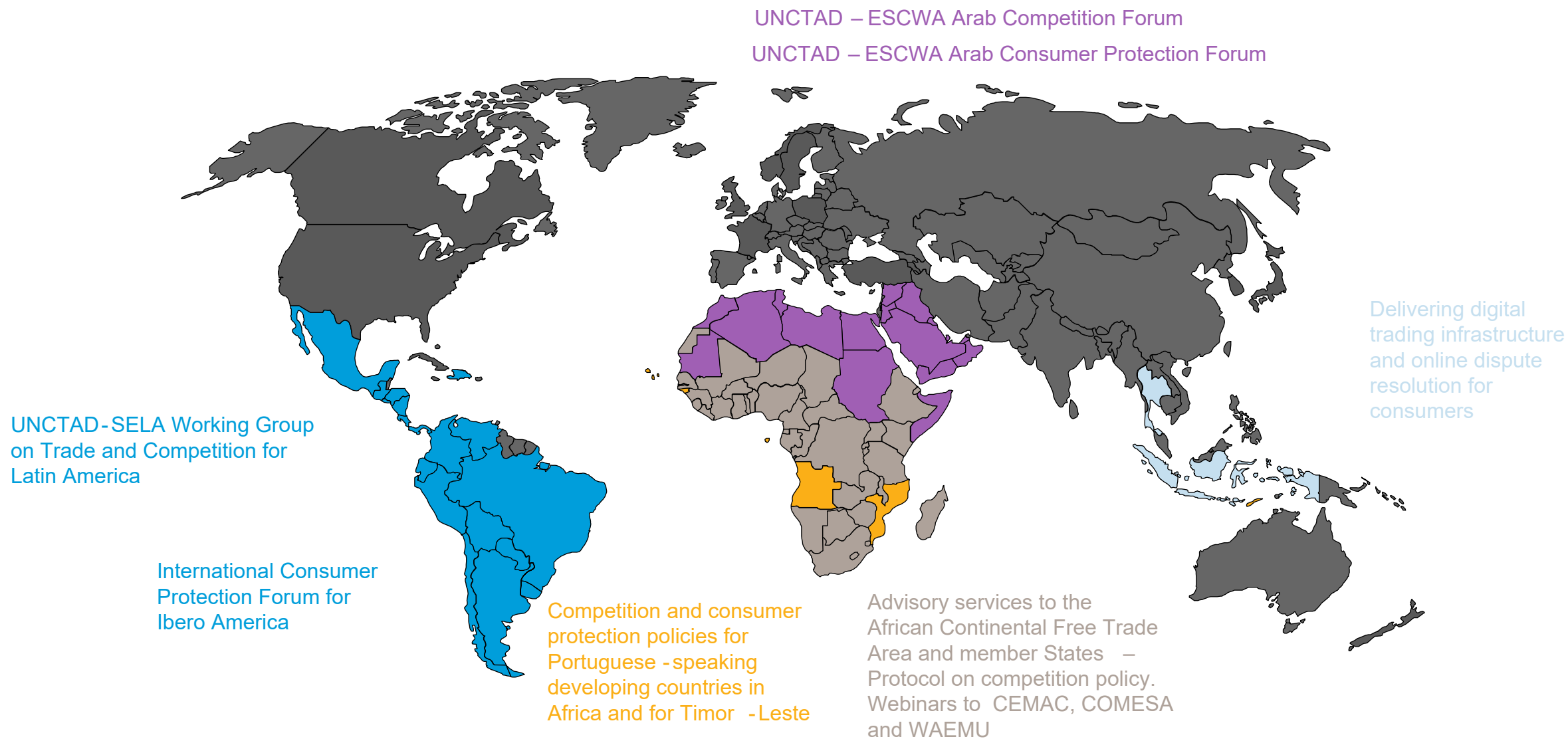
## 2023 – 2024

- ▶ Paraguay – Competition week and UNGCP
- ▶ Thailand – National Consumer Day

### **Specialized training courses for the judiciary and the media**

- ▶ Competition trainings were held in Albania, Botswana, Dominican Republic, Egypt, El Salvador, Morocco and Paraguay, covering enforcement, judicial review, economic analysis, and merger control.
- ▶ Competition workshops for the media were conducted in Dominican Republic and Morocco.

# Regional activities



\*The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the



# ➤ International activities



SMEs development and competition policy



Sustainable consumption



Product safety



Consumer protection in health services



Consumer associations



Competition law and policy

# ➤ Voluntary Peer Reviews 2020 - 2024

- ▶ On Competition law and policy: The West African Economic and Monetary Union (2020), Malawi (2021), Bangladesh (2022), Paraguay (2023), Egypt (2024).



- ▶ On Consumer protection law and policy: Peru (2020), Chile (2021), Thailand (2022), Gabon (2023).
- ▶ Implementation assessment (2024)
  - ▶ 53% of legal and policy related recommendations
  - ▶ 66% of institutional recommendations



# ➤ Way forward

## Key Priorities for UNCTAD's Technical Cooperation

- ▶ Strengthen national frameworks: Support LDCs in adopting, revising, and implementing effective competition and consumer protection regimes, with practical tools and strategies for engagement.
- ▶ Support new authorities: Provide tailored guidance, institutional development, and targeted capacity -building, including expanded online training on emerging challenges like digital economy and the evolving global context.
- ▶ Enhance regional cooperation: Facilitate cross -border collaboration and reinforce regional networks in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, promoting stronger links and shared solutions.

# Thank you



Excellencies, distinguished delegates, colleagues,

### SLIDE 3

UNCTAD serves as the UN focal point on competition and consumer protection, helping developing and least developed countries build fairer and more transparent markets.

UNCTAD provides capacity-building and technical assistance, upon request and depending on resources. This support ranges from helping countries draft laws and policies, to strengthening institutions, training officials, and fostering cooperation between agencies.

Over the past five years, from 2020 to 2024, UNCTAD's work adapted to major global shifts. The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted economies and underscored the need for robust frameworks. At the same time, digitalization accelerated and sustainability became an ever more pressing priority. UNCTAD responded by scaling up remote delivery and focusing on these emerging needs.

During this period, we received **35 formal requests for cooperation**, trained over **2,600 participants**, and recorded a **91% satisfaction rate** — reflecting not just demand, but also the trust placed in UNCTAD to help countries develop frameworks that benefit both businesses and consumers.

### SLIDE 4

Let me turn to examples on **national activities**.

In **Albania**, UNCTAD launched a project in 2024 funded by the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development, focused on fostering competition law, policy and culture. This initiative will be further presented by two panellists,

In Bhutan, we provided capacity-building to the Competition and Consumer Affairs Authority to strengthen its ability to enforce both competition and consumer protection laws, and to support the practical implementation of its legal and institutional frameworks.

In the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**, UNCTAD launched a project in 2023 to strengthen competition and consumer protection. A fact-finding mission assessed existing legislation and recommended reforms, resulting in a three-year road map presented to authorities, including steps toward adopting a consumer protection law.

### SLIDE 5

**Expanding on other national activities**, here you can see further examples.

In **2020**, UNCTAD:

- Conducted a **competition legal assessment in Belarus**.
- In Morocco, organized a national seminar on competition law and economics **together with personal data protection**.



- Provided support to **Myanmar on State aid** control.
- Helped **Peru address hoarding and excessive pricing**, critical in the context of pandemic disruptions.
- Assisted **Uzbekistan on price regulation** matters.

In **2021 and 2022**:

- UNCTAD supported **Barbados in developing merger guidelines**.
- Worked with **Guatemala on competition issues linked to public procurement**. UNCTAD supported the advancement of a national competition law, which was finally adopted in December 2024.

Then in **2023 and 2024**:

- Assisted **Thailand** with competition issues in the hospitality sector and during National Consumer Day, presenting peer review findings and organizing a workshop on cross-border e-commerce dispute resolution.
- In **Paraguay**, UNCTAD helped organize a **Competition Week** to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the competition Law, and organize a webinar for consumers on the UN Guidelines for Consumer Protection.

Additionally, between 2020 and 2025, UNCTAD delivered specialized training courses for judges in Albania, Botswana, the Dominican Republic, Egypt, El Salvador, Morocco, and Paraguay. Recognizing the media's role in shaping public understanding, we also organized workshops for journalists in the Dominican Republic and Morocco.

## Slide 6

Moving to **regional activities**, over the last five years UNCTAD has supported projects across various regions, as illustrated on the map.

Since 2020, a project funded by Portugal has supported **Angola, Cabo Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Timor-Leste**. One of the beneficiaries will share more later.

UNCTAD supported the **AfCFTA competition protocol**, adopted in 2023, and delivered workshops in Libreville (CEMAC) and Nairobi (COMESA), training over 100 participants. UNCTAD also continued helping **CEMAC** transpose regional rules into national laws through six events in Gabon.

In the **Arab region**, together with ESCWA and the OECD, we co-organized six Arab Competition Forums since 2020 and the first Arab Consumer Protection Forum. Outcomes will be detailed by a speaker later.

In **Latin America**, we organized the joint UNCTAD-SELA Working Group on Trade and Competition, addressing e-commerce, fintech, and AI in procurement, and hosted the annual International Consumer Protection Forum, which will also be presented later.

In **Asia**, UNCTAD contributed to an ASEAN project developing a toolkit on sustainable consumption.

Particularly in Indonesia and Thailand, UNCTAD implemented a project on consumer online dispute resolution systems for cross-border e-commerce, training officials and advancing legal infrastructure.

## SLIDE 7

At the international level, UNCTAD addressed a range of emerging priorities for competition and consumer protection.

On SMEs and competition, a global initiative launched in 2020 examined how competition policy can improve market access for micro, small and medium enterprises. It included studies in Brazil, South Africa, and Thailand, regional dialogues, and **an online self-paced course where over 100 certificates were awarded.**

On consumer protection in health services, UNCTAD worked with regional commissions. It produced two reports: one on practices in health service delivery, and another on infrastructure, e-health, and how to integrate informal sectors, to better prepare for future crises.

Under sustainable consumption, together with UNEP we linked consumer protection to multilateral environmental agreements, sharing results through regional webinars, biodiversity and climate COP events, and within the One Planet Network.

For consumer associations, we partnered with Consumers International on standards, trust in cross-border e-commerce, and fair trade discussions under India's G20 presidency. At the 2023 Global Congress, UNCTAD hosted a side event on empowering consumer groups.

On product safety, we continued annual workshops with the European Commission, covering needs of least developed countries, cross-border cooperation, civil society, and academia. In 2024, draft principles that were presented yesterday.

Finally, on competition law, UNCTAD co-hosted events with Türkiye under the Istanbul Competition Forum on digital platforms and pandemic impacts.

Since 2021, through UNCTAD's partnership with the Florence Competition School, UNCTAD facilitated specialized training for developing-country officials, reaching 37 participants so far.

## SLIDE 8

Let me now turn to UNCTAD's voluntary peer reviews, which continue to be a core tool of our technical cooperation.

By January 2025, **30 jurisdictions** had undergone reviews on competition law and policy—and **six countries** had completed peer reviews on consumer protection.

Between **2020 and 2024**, peer reviews covered

**On competition law and policy:**

- **WAEMU (2020):** This was WAEMU's second review, assessing progress since 2007.
- **Malawi (2021):**
- **Bangladesh (2022):**
- **Paraguay (2023):**
- **Egypt (2024):**

**On consumer protection law and policy:**

- **Peru (2020):**
- **Chile (2021):**
- **Thailand (2022):**
- **Gabon (2023):**

To measure the effectiveness of this work, UNCTAD carried out an **implementation assessment in 2024**, covering Morocco, Indonesia, Peru, Chile and Thailand. This found that **53% of legal and policy-related recommendations** and **66% of institutional recommendations** had already been implemented. Countries with more follow-up assistance, like Indonesia and Thailand, reported even higher uptake—showing how peer reviews, coupled with technical support, drive real change.

## **SLIDE 9**

To close, let me highlight the **key priorities for UNCTAD's technical cooperation over the next five years**.

First, UNCTAD will continue to **strengthen national frameworks**, especially supporting least developed countries to adopt, revise, and implement effective regimes, with practical tools, soft law instruments, and strategies to engage stakeholders.

Second, we will place strong emphasis on **supporting new authorities**, providing tailored guidance and building capacities through more online and specialized training, to address challenges of digital markets and the evolving global context.

Finally, UNCTAD will continue to **enhance regional cooperation**, facilitating cross-border collaboration and reinforcing networks in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. With its extensive track record, UNCTAD is well positioned to “network the networks,” helping regions connect and coordinate more effectively.

Together, these priorities aim to build stronger, fairer, and more resilient markets that protect consumers and support sustainable growth.

Thank you.