



## United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

Distr.: General  
28 April 2025

Original: English

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### **Ninth United Nations Conference to Review All Aspects of the Set of Multilaterally Agreed Equitable Principles and Rules for the Control of Restrictive Business Practices**

Geneva, 7–11 July 2025

Item 17 of the provisional agenda

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

#### **Note by the UNCTAD secretariat**

##### *Summary*

UNCTAD provides capacity-building in and technical assistance on competition and consumer protection laws and policies in developing countries and the least developed countries. Such assistance is tailored to the requests and needs of member States and depends on the availability of resources. It encompasses both national and regional-level support in drafting legislation and policy guidelines, as well as in implementing policies over the long term.

Capacity-building and technical cooperation activities in 2021–2024, as reported to the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Competition Law and Policy and the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Consumer Protection Law and Policy, as well as some activities in 2025, are detailed in this note. Proposals are presented for future technical cooperation activities, based on UNCTAD strategy in these two areas, for consideration by delegates at the Ninth United Nations Review Conference to Review All Aspects of the Set of Multilaterally Agreed Equitable Principles and Rules for the Control of Restrictive Business Practices.



## I. Introduction

1. UNCTAD is the focal point for competition and consumer protection law and policy within the United Nations system. UNCTAD aims to assist developing countries in accessing the benefits of a globalized economy more fairly and effectively and equipping them to address the potential drawbacks of greater economic integration. UNCTAD provides advisory services, technical assistance and capacity-building activities to developing countries in strengthening legal and regulatory frameworks for competition and consumer protection and in enhancing the capacities of institutions. By fostering fair competition and protecting consumer rights, such efforts help create more inclusive and efficient markets, ensuring that businesses compete on a level playing field and that consumers benefit from greater choice, fair prices and improved quality in goods and services.

2. The Set of Multilaterally Agreed Equitable Principles and Rules for the Control of Restrictive Business Practices was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in resolution 35/63 of 5 December 1980. The Set aims to facilitate the adoption and strengthening of laws and policies in this area at both the national and regional levels and states that collaboration at the international level should include “implementation within or facilitation by UNCTAD, and other relevant organizations of the United Nations system in conjunction with UNCTAD, of technical assistance, advisory and training programmes on restrictive business practices, particularly for developing countries”.<sup>1</sup> The General Assembly, in resolution 35/63, established an intergovernmental group of experts as the international institutional machinery of the Set and, in resolution 52/182 of 11 March 1998, renamed it as the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Competition Law and Policy.

3. The United Nations guidelines for consumer protection, adopted by the General Assembly in 1985 and revised in 1999 and 2015, include a chapter on international cooperation; States “should promote and facilitate capacity-building in the area of sustainable consumption”. The General Assembly established the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Consumer Protection Law and Policy to, inter alia, provide capacity-building and technical assistance to developing countries “in formulating and enforcing consumer protection laws and policies”.<sup>2</sup>

4. The Eighth United Nations Review Conference to Review All Aspects of the Set underlined “the essential role of UNCTAD in providing technical assistance and capacity-building in the fields of competition and consumer protection” and requested UNCTAD to “conduct follow-up and an impact assessment of technical cooperation activities” and “further explore and develop joint and complementary work with other international and regional organizations for more effective and stronger assistance to developing countries”.<sup>3</sup>

5. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, at its fifteenth session, stated that it was “fundamental for fair, sound and robust competition and consumer protection policies and enforcement to maintain a robust, level playing field and enhance transparency for all participants”; and that multilateral dialogue and cooperation were crucial in the governance of emerging technologies, including those related to data management, competition and consumer protection.<sup>4</sup> The Trade and Development Board, at its sixty-ninth session, approved the technical cooperation strategy, which stated that UNCTAD technical cooperation would be results-oriented, so as to maximize the impact of activities; be supportive of national development efforts; be carried out in close consultation with beneficiaries and funding partners; and target long-term development needs, such as human and institutional capacity and environmental, debt-related and digital challenges.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A/RES/35/63, A/C.2/35/6.

<sup>2</sup> A/RES/70/186.

<sup>3</sup> TD/RBP/CONF.9/9.

<sup>4</sup> TD/541/Add.2.

<sup>5</sup> TD/B/69/4, TD/B/69/4/Add.1.

6. Capacity-building and technical assistance activities in 2021–2024 in the fields of competition and consumer protection, at the national, regional and international levels, are detailed in the present document.

## II. Activities implemented in 2020–2024

7. During this period, the pandemic had a significant impact on technical assistance activities, shaping both their focus and delivery. The crisis underscored the importance of strong competition and consumer protection frameworks, to address emerging challenges, such as disruptions in supply chains, the growth of digital markets and the need for equitable access to essential goods and services. UNCTAD adapted technical assistance services to these realities by prioritizing remote-delivery mechanisms, leveraging digital tools and responding to the increased needs of member States, exacerbated by the pandemic. Such adaptations ensured the continued relevance and effectiveness of UNCTAD technical assistance during the global crisis.

8. In 2019–2023, a total of 224 technical cooperation requests were received for which funding was required and, of these, one of the three products registering the highest number of requests was competition and consumer protection policies and frameworks.<sup>6</sup> This serves to highlight the increasing recognition of these issues as key in inclusive economic development. According to internal data collection, in 2021–2023, over 2,600 participants, of which 48 per cent were women, completed training courses offered by UNCTAD on competition and/or consumer protection; on average, 91 per cent of participants were very satisfied or satisfied with the initiatives. The training courses benefited 125 public institutions, 25 private institutions and five international organizations.

### A. National level

9. UNCTAD implements technical assistance activities tailored to the requests of member States, including training sessions, webinars, advisory services and the development of soft-law tools, reflecting a comprehensive approach to strengthening competition and consumer protection frameworks.

10. In 2020, in Belarus, during an event organized by the Ministry of Antimonopoly Regulation and Trade, UNCTAD presented a legal assessment of the competition law of Belarus.<sup>7</sup> In Morocco, with the Competition Council and the National Commission for the Protection of Personal Data, UNCTAD organized a national seminar on competition law and economics and personal data protection.<sup>8</sup> In Myanmar, UNCTAD organized a training workshop on State aid and competition issues, for the Competition Commission.<sup>9</sup> In Peru, UNCTAD provided guidance in a webinar on competition and consumer protection tools on hoarding and price gouging during the pandemic.<sup>10</sup> In Uzbekistan, UNCTAD provided recommendations on price regulation and addressing excessive pricing practices, supporting pandemic-related measures.

11. In 2021, in Barbados, UNCTAD organized a training workshop for officials to validate and share the outcomes of technical assistance efforts, initiated in 2019, focusing on preparing merger guidelines, reviewing merger provisions and drafting recommendations. In Guatemala, UNCTAD and the Ministry of Economy co-organized a webinar on competition in public procurement, to enhance national competitiveness, and UNCTAD supported the advancement of a national competition law, adopted in

<sup>6</sup> TD/B/WP/332.

<sup>7</sup> See <https://unctad.org/meeting/joint-presentation-unctad-legal-assessment-competition-law-belarus> and <https://unctad.org/publication/assessment-competition-law-belarus>.

<sup>8</sup> See <https://unctad.org/meeting/moroccos-national-seminar-competition-law-and-economics-and-personal-data-protection>.

<sup>9</sup> See <https://unctad.org/meeting/virtual-training-workshop-competition-issues-and-state-aid-myanmar-competition-commission>.

<sup>10</sup> See <https://unctad.org/meeting/peru-competition-day>.

December 2024.<sup>11</sup> In Thailand, UNCTAD supported an impact assessment report of the hospitality sector, focused on competition in the online travel agency market.

12. In 2023, in Bhutan, UNCTAD conducted three workshops for the 12 officers of the Competition and Consumer Affairs Authority, supporting the development of the first competition law, covering topics such as institutional design, enforcement techniques, advocacy, the relationship between competition policy and sectoral regulations and regional and international cooperation.<sup>12</sup> In Paraguay, marking the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the competition law, UNCTAD disseminated the findings of the voluntary peer review of competition law and policy during a five-day event that engaged stakeholders from the Government, business and civil society, which included high-level meetings advocating for legal reforms. UNCTAD support since 2009 in the drafting of the law had assisted in strengthening the competition framework, fostering market integrity and economic fairness. In addition, in cooperation with the Secretary of Defence of the Consumer and User, UNCTAD hosted a webinar on the United Nations guidelines for consumer protection, focused on emerging challenges for modern consumers. In Thailand, on National Consumer Day, UNCTAD presented the findings of the voluntary peer review of consumer protection law and policy and a report on the national framework for consumer dispute resolution in cross-border electronic commerce (e-commerce), followed by a workshop on cross-border consumer dispute resolution, comparing different systems and discussing challenges and good practices in enhancing consumer redress mechanisms in Thailand.<sup>13</sup>

13. In 2023–2024, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, UNCTAD launched a technical cooperation project on strengthening the competition and consumer protection frameworks, including a fact-finding mission that assessed existing legislation and recommended actions for strengthening institutional and regulatory structures and for adopting consumer protection legislation, outlined in a three-year road map presented to Government authorities.<sup>14</sup>

14. In 2024, in Albania, UNCTAD launched a project, funded by the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development, on fostering competition law and policy and a competition culture. Two training courses, in 2024 and 2025, were organized for over 21 judges and magistrates, in cooperation with the School of Magistrates, laying the foundations of substantive and procedural aspects of competition law and serving to enhance participants' knowledge of merger control and regulated sectors. A joint international forum with the Competition Authority and Consumer Protection Commission, with over 110 participants, addressed the interface of competition and consumer protection, leading to a memorandum of understanding between the institutions.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> See <https://unctad.org/meeting/seminario-sobre-importancia-de-la-competencia-en-las-compras-publicas-para-incrementar-la>.

<sup>12</sup> See <https://unctad.org/meeting/third-workshop-competition-and-consumer-affairs-authority-bhutan>.

<sup>13</sup> TD/B/C.I/CPLP/30. See <https://unctad.org/meeting/dissemination-unctads-voluntary-peer-review-consumer-protection-law-and-policy-thailand> and <https://unctad.org/publication/report-national-framework-consumer-dispute-resolution-cross-border-e-commerce-thailand>.

<sup>14</sup> See <https://unctad.org/Topic/Competition-and-Consumer-Protection/project-in-the-democratic-republic-of-the-congo>, <https://unctad.org/meeting/launch-unctads-technical-assistance-project-democratic-republic-congo-institutional-and> and <https://unctad.org/meeting/validation-du-projet-en-republique-democratique-du-congo-mission-denquete>.

<sup>15</sup> See <https://unctad.org/project/fostering-competition-law-and-policy-and-competition-culture-albania>, <https://unctad.org/meeting/training-workshop-judicial-enforcement-competition-law-substantives-and-procedural-aspects>, <https://unctad.org/meeting/training-workshop-judicial-enforcement-competition-law-merger-control-and-regulated-sectors> and <https://unctad.org/meeting/international-forum-interface-between-competition-and-consumer-protection-policies>.

15. UNCTAD provided advisory services in Brazil (2020), to strengthen consumer protection frameworks in reviewing the definition of “consumer”; in the Dominican Republic (2020), on addressing unsafe trade products related to the pandemic; in Chile (2022, 2024), on constitutional provisions for consumer rights, informed by international best practices, and on the sanctioning powers of consumer protection authorities, collective actions and alternative consumer dispute resolution mechanisms; and in Paraguay (2024–2025), on the integration of sustainable consumption into consumer protection regulation. UNCTAD also organized specialized training courses for the judiciary and the media (box 1).

#### Box 1

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

UNCTAD has organized training for the judiciary, to enhance capacity to enforce competition and consumer protection laws, which is key in ensuring consistency and fairness in applying these frameworks.

In Botswana (2021), training addressed both competition and consumer protection, equipping members of the Competition and Consumer Tribunal with strategies to handle cases across these interrelated areas. In El Salvador (2021), training for magistrates of new administrative courts covered competition law enforcement, including inspections, interim measures, judicial reviews and fine calculations. In Morocco (2022), training focused on international best practices in competition law. In the Dominican Republic (2023), training for 50 judges addressed the application of competition law, including economic analysis and judicial review. In Paraguay (2023), training covered economic analysis, judicial review, relevant market definitions and sanctions. In Albania (2024–2025), training for 20 members of the judiciary focused on substantive and procedural aspects of competition law, merger control and competition in regulated sectors. In Egypt (2024), training for judges aimed at improving understanding of competition law enforcement.

UNCTAD organized training for the media in Morocco (2021), with the World Bank; and in the Dominican Republic (2024), in collaboration with the competition authority, to hold a specialized workshop for journalists and communicators.

*Source:* TD/B/C.I/CPLP/36–TD/B/C.I/CLP/71. See <https://unctad.org/meeting/seminar-competition-and-consumer-protection-botswana-tribunal-members>, <https://unctad.org/meeting/foro-de-formacion-de-jueces-de-el-salvador-en-derecho-de-la-competencia>, <https://unctad.org/meeting/dissemination-peer-review-competition-law-and-policy-recommendations>, [https://unctad.org/system/files/information-document/ccpb\\_Procompetencia\\_Capacitacion\\_Jueces\\_Octubre\\_2023\\_sp.pdf](https://unctad.org/system/files/information-document/ccpb_Procompetencia_Capacitacion_Jueces_Octubre_2023_sp.pdf), [https://unctad.org/system/files/information-document/ccpb\\_agenda\\_vpr\\_dissemination\\_egypt\\_10dec\\_en.pdf](https://unctad.org/system/files/information-document/ccpb_agenda_vpr_dissemination_egypt_10dec_en.pdf) and <https://unctad.org/meeting/training-course-journalists-dominican-republic-competition-law-and-policy>.

## **B. Regional level**

16. UNCTAD implemented technical assistance activities in Africa, the Arab region, Latin America and Southeast Asia, as well as under the project for Portuguese-speaking countries in Africa and for Timor-Leste (box 2). UNCTAD organized several events fostering regional coordination and integration with regard to competition and consumer protection laws and policies, covering consumer product safety, the role of consumer associations, competition in the digital economy and online dispute resolution.

#### Box 2

##### **Competition and consumer protection policies for Portuguese-speaking developing countries in Africa and for Timor-Leste**

Since 2020, UNCTAD has implemented this technical cooperation project, funded by Portugal. The project supports Angola, Cabo Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Sao Tome and Principe and Timor-Leste in leveraging competition and consumer

protection for development and regional cooperation.

Key activities have included webinars on consumer protection law and policy and on competition law enforcement (2021), addressing challenges and perspectives with regard to international cooperation. A follow-up webinar explored best practices at the intersection of the two policies (2022).

Another set of webinars has covered market studies, cartel detection, leniency regimes and public procurement collusion (2023), with contributions from the Competition Commission of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the secretariat of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), emphasizing the regional dimension and South–South cooperation. A subsequent webinar focused on judicial review, economic analysis and merger control issues (2023). A discussion was held of key principles of competition law and policy and their connection to public interest considerations (2024).

With regard to consumer protection issues, three webinars covered the United Nations guidelines for consumer protection, e-commerce, product safety and sustainable consumption (2023), the interplay between competition and consumer protection policies, national cooperation and enforcement (2023) and consumer rights to information, health, safety and sustainability (2024). Each webinar was attended by over 50 government officers.

UNCTAD organized two meetings (2023) for an exchange of experiences with Brazil and Portugal, including such topics as stages of development and shared challenges, capacity-building and institutional financial independence. In Cabo Verde, a seminar (2024) held in cooperation with the competition authority discussed anticompetitive practices and closed cases among competition officers. These events helped to build expertise and encourage a culture of competition and consumer protection in the countries. In Cabo Verde, UNCTAD supported the establishment of the competition authority and provided assistance on mergers in telecommunications, regulatory frameworks and advocacy. In Guinea Bissau, UNCTAD is reviewing draft bills on competition and consumer protection. In Mozambique, UNCTAD assisted the Authority with regard to the leniency programme. In Timor-Leste, UNCTAD assisted in the drafting, implementation and dissemination of the competition law, as part of the accession of the country to the World Trade Organization (2024).

The success of the project is further demonstrated by the bilateral cooperation agreements on competition policy between Angola and Cabo Verde, Angola and Portugal, Cabo Verde and Mozambique, Mozambique and Angola, Mozambique and Brazil and Mozambique and Portugal.

The voluntary peer review of the consumer protection law and policy of Angola will be presented in July 2025.

*Source:* UNCTAD. See <https://unctad.org/project/technical-assistance-and-capacity-building-competition-and-consumer-protection-african>, <https://unctad.org/meeting/webinar-consumer-protection-policy-portuguese-speaking-countriesseminario-sobre-politica-de>, <https://unctad.org/meeting/webinar-competition-law-and-policy-portuguese-speaking-countriesseminario-sobre-defesa-da>, <https://unctad.org/meeting/webinar-competition-and-consumer-protection-policies-portuguese-speaking-countries>, <https://unctad.org/meeting/webinar-competition-law-and-policy-portuguese-speaking-countriesseminario-sobre-direito-e>, <https://unctad.org/meeting/webinar-competition-law-and-policy-portuguese-speaking-countriesseminario-sobre-direito-da>, <https://unctad.org/meeting/webinar-consumer-protection-policy-portuguese-speaking-countriesseminario-sobre-politica-0>, <https://unctad.org/meeting/webinar-consumer-protection-policy-portuguese-speaking-countriesseminario-sobre-politica-1>, <https://unctad.org/meeting/webinar-competition-law-and-policy-portuguese-speaking-countries-seminario-sobre-direito-da>.

## 1. Other activities in Africa

17. Since 2019, UNCTAD has provided advisory services to the secretariat of the African Continental Free Trade Area and member States, supporting the negotiation and

drafting of the protocol on competition policy (2023). UNCTAD organized a webinar on key competition and consumer protection priorities for regional integration in Africa (2020), to discuss integration within the African Continental Free Trade Area with participants from national authorities, regional networks (Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC), COMESA, WAEMU), non-governmental organizations and academia; two workshops (2021–2022) followed.<sup>16</sup> UNCTAD participated in the third meeting of the Committee on Competition Policy under the African Continental Free Trade Area (2022), at which draft guiding principles and negotiating modalities of the protocol were advanced.

18. Following the adoption of the protocol, UNCTAD organized two capacity-building workshops under a memorandum of understanding with the secretariat of the African Continental Free Trade Area, in Libreville for CEMAC (2023, in cooperation with the European Union) and in Nairobi for COMESA (2023).<sup>17</sup> Together, they trained over 100 participants, providing insights into the protocol; the complexities of national merger and acquisitions landscapes, with cross-border merger analysis emphasized at the regional and continental levels; the abuse of market power, with selected national, regional and international competition enforcement cases highlighted; economic analysis in merger control and abuse of dominance cases; and considerations for drafting regulations, to establish thresholds for mergers and abuses of dominance at the continental level.

19. UNCTAD continued to support CEMAC in implementing two regulations and two directives on competition and consumer protection, adopted by the Council of Ministers in 2019, developed under a programme funded by the European Union, and transposed into the national legislation of member States. To facilitate this process, UNCTAD, in partnership with the Government of Gabon and CEMAC, organized six events (2021), to raise awareness and build capacity among key stakeholders, targeting government ministries, members of parliament, agencies, entrepreneurs and chambers of commerce, focused on competition and consumer protection rules and economic analysis in competition law enforcement.<sup>18</sup>

20. In 2022 and 2024, UNCTAD made interventions in the first and the third sessions of Africa-European Union Competition Week, organized under a cooperation project for countries in Africa, managed by the College of Europe and funded by the European Union.<sup>19</sup>

## 2. Activities in the Arab region

21. In 2019, UNCTAD signed a letter of understanding with the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, to promote and strengthen competition policies in the Arab region, under which the Arab Competition Forum was launched in 2020 and has since served as an annual platform for knowledge-sharing, dialogue and regional cooperation. The first forum (Lebanon, 2020) discussed competition and economic development, effective competition frameworks, competition policy and private sector development and competition and public procurement. The second forum (Egypt, 2021) addressed measures taken during the pandemic, institutional design and enforcement best practices; and a joint webinar on competitive neutrality (2021) emphasized economic growth and attractive business

<sup>16</sup> See <https://unctad.org/meeting/key-competition-and-consumer-protection-priorities-regional-integration-africa-webinar> and <https://unctad.org/meeting/training-programme-competition-law-and-policy-afcfta-members>.

<sup>17</sup> See <https://unctad.org/meeting/regional-workshop-competition-policy-and-law-african-continental-free-trade-area-afcfta> and <https://unctad.org/meeting/african-continental-free-trade-area-afcfta-regional-workshop-competition-policy-and-law>.

<sup>18</sup> See <https://unctad.org/meeting/seminaire-de-vulgarisation-des-textes-communautaires-sur-la-concurrence-et-la-protection>, <https://unctad.org/meeting/seminaire-de-vulgarisation-des-textes-communautaires-sur-la-concurrence-et-la-protection-0>, <https://unctad.org/meeting/seminaire-de-vulgarisation-des-textes-communautaires-sur-la-concurrence-et-la-protection-1>, <https://unctad.org/meeting/seminaire-sur-la-mise-en-application-des-regles-de-concurrence> and <https://unctad.org/meeting/seminaire-sur-la-protection-des-consommateurs>.

<sup>19</sup> See <https://africa.competitioncooperation.eu/competition-weeks>.

environments. The third forum (Oman, 2022) discussed interlinkages between competition and other economic policies, with case studies showcasing regional developments supporting young and small authorities. The fourth forum (Saudi Arabia, 2023) addressed the abuse of dominance in digital markets, cross-border merger control and market studies. The fifth forum (Tunisia, 2024) discussed competition advocacy, cooperation between Arab competition authorities, competition and industrial policies and competitive neutrality. The sixth forum (May 2025) has been organized in cooperation with the Council for Competition and Monopoly Affairs of Iraq.<sup>20</sup>

22. In 2024, the first Arab Consumer Protection Forum was launched by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, with UNCTAD and the Consumer Protection Directorate of Bahrain, as a platform for knowledge-sharing with regard to consumer protection policy and enforcement among Arab stakeholders. The forum promoted collaboration and coordination among consumer protection authorities in member States of the Economic and Social Commission, guided by international best practices on strengthening consumer rights, improving enforcement and aligning with the Sustainable Development Goals.<sup>21</sup>

### 3. Activities in Latin America

23. Since the conclusion of the third phase of Competition and Consumer Protection Policies for Latin America,<sup>22</sup> UNCTAD has continued to support competition authorities in Latin America through self-funded activities by beneficiary countries. In cooperation with the Zurich School of Management and Law, Switzerland, UNCTAD issued a report, to assist in improving the compliance programmes of competition authorities, facilitating cooperation between authorities and courts, raising business awareness and enhancing legal certainty for cross-border trade and market integration.<sup>23</sup> The findings were presented during national competition day in Panama (2021) and Paraguay (2021) and during competition week in the Dominican Republic (2023).<sup>24</sup>

24. UNCTAD collaborated with the Latin American and Caribbean Economic System in organizing annual meetings of the joint working group on trade and competition, the sole forum involving trade and competition officials since 2010. The tenth meeting (Paraguay, 2022) focused on e-commerce and the digital economy as tools for regional economic recovery, leading to recommendations on regulatory harmonization.<sup>25</sup> The eleventh meeting (Dominican Republic, 2023) covered regulatory policies in competition and trade, in particular their role in fostering the development and effective functioning of financial markets, particularly in the domain of financial technologies.<sup>26</sup> The twelfth meeting (Honduras, 2024) addressed the challenges and opportunities of artificial intelligence in public procurement, followed by an academic forum exploring disclosure, compensation for damages and confidentiality.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>20</sup> See <https://unctad.org/meeting/fifth-joint-un-escwa-unctad-oecd-competition-forum-arab-region> and <https://unctad.org/meeting/joint-un-escwa-unctad-and-oecd-webinar-understanding-competitive-neutrality>.

<sup>21</sup> See <https://unctad.org/meeting/first-arab-consumer-protection-forum>.

<sup>22</sup> The third phase (2015–2018) focused on institutional strengthening and capacities in competition and consumer protection for 17 beneficiary countries in Latin America; the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs, Switzerland, funded the project from 2004. See <https://unctad.org/meeting/global-compal-annual-conference-launch-new-regional-programme-latin-america>.

<sup>23</sup> UNCTAD, 2023, *Competition Compliance Programmes: The Experience of Latin America* (United Nations publication, sales No. E.23.II.D.32, Geneva).

<sup>24</sup> See <https://unctad.org/meeting/national-competition-day-panama> and <https://unctad.org/meeting/national-day-competition-paraguay>.

<sup>25</sup> See <https://sela.org/agenda/x-grupo-de-trabajo-sobre-comercio-y-competencia-de-alc/>.

<sup>26</sup> See <https://unctad.org/meeting/competition-week-dominican-republic-and-annual-meeting-competition-and-trade-working-group>.

<sup>27</sup> See <https://unctad.org/meeting/working-group-trade-and-competition-latin-america-and-caribbean-12th-annual-meeting> and <https://unctad.org/meeting/academic-forum-competition-latin-america-and-caribbean>.



25. UNCTAD participated in meetings of the Central American Competition Forum addressing competition policy in response to the pandemic (Dominican Republic, 2020) and international cooperation and cross-border cartels (Costa Rica, 2021), highlighting the limited cooperation in the region in addressing transnational anticompetitive practices. UNCTAD, to help effectively foster cooperation, presented the guiding policies and procedures under section F of the Set, adopted at the Eighth United Nations Conference to Review All Aspects of the Set.

26. Since 2011, UNCTAD has hosted the annual International Consumer Protection Forum for Latin America, a major regional public forum on consumer protection issues, attracting over 300 participants annually, including policymakers and representatives of businesses, consumer associations, academia and civil society. The forum facilitates the exchange of views on current and future challenges, fostering regional cooperation and advancing consumer welfare. The tenth forum (Portugal, 2021) addressed improving the formulation of public policy on consumer protection and consumer data protection.<sup>28</sup> The eleventh forum (Paraguay, 2022) focused on promoting sustainable consumption in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.<sup>29</sup> The twelfth forum (Argentina, 2022) explored consumer protection and digital platforms, including online dispute resolution and overindebtedness.<sup>30</sup> The thirteenth forum (Dominican Republic, 2023) discussed cross-border consumer dispute resolution, the role of agencies in enhancing consumer associations and the future of regional cooperation in Latin America.<sup>31</sup> The fourteenth forum (Colombia, 2024) addressed adaptive legal frameworks for protecting consumers in the digital age, innovations in consumer education and the role of regional trade agreements. UNCTAD presented findings on transparent and effective consumer labelling for plastics and alternatives.<sup>32</sup> The forum, organized alongside the Iberoamerican Forum of Consumer Protection Agencies, has consistently served as a foundation for advancing discussions at the regional level. UNCTAD has collaborated with the Iberoamerican Forum, participating in dialogues on hoarding and price gouging, refunds, consumer bankruptcy, unfair commercial practices and international and cross-border cooperation, as well as the forum's first online conference on consumer protection (2020).<sup>33</sup>

27. In collaboration with the University of Buenos Aires, UNCTAD delivered two master classes, on consumer protection in times of crisis, reflecting on the challenges posed by cascading crises such as the war in Ukraine, climate change and the pandemic (2022); and on consumer protection and gender (2023), enhancing the capacities of officials from several countries in Latin America.<sup>34</sup>

#### 4. Delivering digital trading infrastructure and online dispute resolution for consumers

28. In 2020–2023, UNCTAD implemented this project, funded by the China Silk Road Group, to enhance consumer trust in e-commerce and international trade. Focused on Indonesia and Thailand, the project was aimed at identifying best practices and defining the legal, technical and infrastructure-related requirements of online dispute resolution systems for the beneficiaries, aligned with the guidelines on online dispute resolution of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).<sup>35</sup> Key activities included publications

<sup>28</sup> See <https://unctad.org/meeting/tenth-international-consumer-protection-forum-compal-programme>.

<sup>29</sup> See <https://unctad.org/meeting/eleventh-international-consumer-protection-forum-compal-programme>.

<sup>30</sup> See <https://unctad.org/meeting/twelfth-compal-international-consumer-protection-forum-latin-america>.

<sup>31</sup> See <https://unctad.org/meeting/thirteenth-compal-international-consumer-protection-forum-latin-america>.

<sup>32</sup> See <https://unctad.org/meeting/fourteenth-international-consumer-protection-forum-latin-america>.

<sup>33</sup> See <https://unctad.org/meeting/participation-new-international-programme-consumer-protection-agencies>.

<sup>34</sup> See <https://unctad.org/meeting/unctad-masterclass-consumer-protection-university-buenos-aires> and <https://unctad.org/meeting/roundtable-consumer-protection-and-gender-national-and-international-experiences>.

<sup>35</sup> See <https://unctad.org/project/delivering-digital-trading-infrastructure-and-online-dispute-resolution-consumers-means> and <https://asean.org/book/asean-guidelines-on-online-dispute-resolution-odr/>.

presented during a session on consumer trust in online dispute resolution,<sup>36</sup> namely, on technology and the future of online dispute resolution platforms for consumer protection agencies;<sup>37</sup> consumer dispute resolution in the world;<sup>38</sup> the national framework for consumer dispute resolution in cross-border e-commerce in Thailand; and the peer review of consumer protection law and policy.

29. The project hosted two capacity-building workshops that trained over 100 government officials, one on policy (2021) and one on technology, analysing emerging technologies and their potential to enhance consumer dispute resolution (2022).<sup>39</sup> UNCTAD conducted consultations with technology teams to define software requirements and facilitated expert discussions on applying emerging technologies, such as blockchain and artificial intelligence, to consumer dispute resolution.

30. The project led to significant involvement with other developing countries, such as India; regional organizations such as ASEAN, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation and the Pacific Alliance; civil society; and academia, which requested UNCTAD to lead initiatives on discussing the resolution of disputes in cross-border consumer cases.<sup>40</sup> The project also fostered South–South cooperation, with Brazil, Colombia and Mexico sharing good practices, to assist Indonesia and Thailand in overcoming challenges, ultimately advancing fairer and more reliable digital markets.

## C. International level

31. At the global level, UNCTAD activities related to, among others, the post-pandemic resurgence of enterprises, consumer protection and the provision of health services and the intersection of consumer protection and sustainability.

### 1. Global initiative towards post-pandemic resurgence of microenterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises

32. In 2020, under this project, UNCTAD launched a component on competition policy, aimed at strengthening the resilience of such enterprises in developing countries by providing advice, capacity-building and support, to increase market access; UNCTAD undertook a global report on the role of competition in improving market access for such enterprises and conducted national studies in Brazil, South Africa and Thailand. Findings were discussed at bilateral consultations (2021–2022) and five regional policy dialogues culminating in a global dialogue (2021).<sup>41</sup> Key issues included access to digital platforms<sup>42</sup> and voluntary mechanisms to prevent abusive conduct by platform operators. UNCTAD developed the following products complementing the recommendations in the global report: online course on the interface of the development of microenterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises and competition policy, covering interlinkages, market access

<sup>36</sup> See <https://unctad.org/meeting/consumer-trust-digital-economy-case-online-dispute-resolution>.

<sup>37</sup> See <https://unctad.org/publication/technology-and-future-online-dispute-resolution-platforms-consumer-protection-agencies>.

<sup>38</sup> UNCTAD, 2024, *Consumer Dispute Resolution in the World* (United Nations publication, sales No. E.24.II.D.8, Geneva).

<sup>39</sup> See <https://unctad.org/meeting/second-online-training-workshop-consumer-dispute-resolution-indonesia-and-thailand>.

<sup>40</sup> See <https://unctad.org/meeting/expert-meeting-building-online-dispute-resolution-southeast-asian-consumers>, <https://unctad.org/meeting/public-private-dialogue-promoting-consumer-protection-dispute-resolution-and-redress> and the draft declaration at <https://unctad.org/meeting/intergovernmental-group-experts-consumer-protection-law-and-policy-eighth-session>.

<sup>41</sup> See <https://unctad.org/project/global-initiative-towards-post-covid-19-resurgence-msme-sector>, <https://unctad.org/publication/covid-19-pandemic-impact-micro-small-and-medium-sized-enterprises>, <https://unctad.org/meeting/conference-contribution-competition-policy-resurgence-msmes-post-covid-19> and <https://unctad.org/meeting/global-policy-dialogue-post-covid-19-resurgence-msmes-and-competition-policy>.

<sup>42</sup> See <https://unctad.org/meeting/webinar-harnessing-interaction-between-digital-platforms-and-msmes-recommended-practices>.

challenges, access to finance, digitalization and inter-agency and institutional collaboration (two editions of the course were held and over 100 certificates awarded); and draft recommended practices for digital platforms towards achieving fair and non-discriminatory access by microenterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises.<sup>43</sup>

## 2. Strengthening social protection for pandemic responses

33. UNCTAD implemented a component of this project, focused on consumer protection and the provision of health services. The initiative, in collaboration with the regional commissions, facilitated interregional cooperation and the exchange of experiences, to address the impact of the pandemic and build resilient societies through enhanced social protection. UNCTAD issued two reports on strengthening consumer protection in the provision of health services, outlining key practices relevant to the health sector and addressing emerging needs due to the pandemic that could inform future crisis responses; and on infrastructure for health, with guidance for social and consumer protection, addressing the role of consumer protection in health services and e-health, with a focus on comprehensive health coverage, financing, e-health access and the integration of informal sectors.<sup>44</sup>

## 3. Sustainable consumption

34. At the request of the Government of the Philippines representing the ASEAN Committee on Consumer Protection and with funding from the Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund, UNCTAD contributed to a regional technical project aimed at promoting sustainable consumption in ASEAN member States through the development of a toolkit to enhance the capacity of consumer protection authorities, consumer associations and businesses, towards achieving sustainable consumption (2020–2021).<sup>45</sup>

35. UNCTAD, in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme, launched a project on advancing consumer protection and information in alignment with multilateral environmental agreements, aimed at empowering consumers in transitioning to a sustainable economy and providing guidance on how consumer information can address key multilateral environmental agreements.<sup>46</sup> A panel discussion explored the impact of such agreements on government policies, businesses, consumers and academic research (2024).<sup>47</sup> Findings were presented at regional webinars for Latin America (2024) and Eastern and Southern Africa (2024), underlining synergies, tools and frameworks to support the implementation of such agreements while fostering consumer rights; at the One Planet Network Forum (2024); at the sixteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (2024);<sup>48</sup> and at the Trade and Investment House during the twenty-ninth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. All initiatives were held as part of the role of

<sup>43</sup> See <https://unctad.org/meeting/graduation-ceremony-online-course-interface-between-competition-policy-and-msme-development> and <https://unctad.org/meeting/graduation-ceremony-second-edition-online-course-interface-between-competition-policy-and>.

<sup>44</sup> See <https://unctad.org/project/strengthening-social-protection-pandemic-responses-identifying-vulnerable-aiding-recovery>, <https://unctad.org/meeting/regional-dialogue-consumer-protection-and-health-times-covid-19>, <https://unctad.org/meeting/webinar-launch-report-social-infrastructure-health-and-consumer-protection-times-covid-19>, <https://unctad.org/publication/strengthening-consumer-protection-provision-health-services-wake-covid-19-pandemic> and <https://unctad.org/publication/social-infrastructure-health-guidance-social-and-consumer-protection>.

<sup>45</sup> See <https://asean.org/book/the-asean-toolkit-on-sustainable-consumption/>.

<sup>46</sup> See <https://unctad.org/project/advancing-consumer-information-and-consumer-protection-alignment-multilateral-environmental>.

<sup>47</sup> See <https://unctad.org/meeting/panel-discussion-revealing-consumer-protection-multilateral-environmental-agreements>.

<sup>48</sup> See <https://unctad.org/meeting/webinar-consumer-protection-multilateral-environmental-agreements-meas>, <https://unctad.org/meeting/webinar-consumer-protection-multilateral-environmental-agreements-eastern-and-southern>, <https://www.unep.org/events/conference/one-planet-network-forum-2024> and <https://unctad.org/meeting/trade-day-convention-biological-diversity-cop16>.

UNCTAD as co-chair of the One Planet Network Consumer Information for Sustainable Consumption and Production Programme (2023–2024).<sup>49</sup>

36. UNCTAD, with the Sustainable Manufacturing and Environmental Pollution Programme, issued a review of parameters and requirements for an effective consumer label on plastics and plastics alternatives, comparing global best practices from developed and developing countries and exploring the key factors needed to equip consumers to make informed and sustainable choices. The findings were presented during the fourteenth session of the International Consumer Protection Forum for Latin America (Colombia, 2024).

#### 4. Product safety

37. Since 2020, UNCTAD and the European Commission have collaborated on advancing consumer product safety frameworks through annual workshops held during International Product Safety Week. The first workshop (2020) aimed to identify the needs of the least developed countries and discussed foundational elements for enhancing consumer product safety, for promoting policy reform and for international cooperation; it featured over 500 participants from national authorities, regulators, consumer organizations, industry, testing laboratories and academia, as well as standard setters, lawyers and product safety experts, with contributions from Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, South Africa, Zambia and European Union member States.<sup>50</sup> The second workshop (2021) focused on legislative and policy frameworks and cross-border and regional cooperation, aligned with the recommendation on preventing the cross-border distribution of known unsafe consumer products.<sup>51</sup> The third workshop (2022) addressed the role of civil society in strengthening consumer product safety and the role of youth and the next generation of product safety ambassadors.<sup>52</sup> The fourth workshop (2023) highlighted synergies between academia and product safety practitioners, with a panel of researchers (predominantly women) exploring collaboration opportunities.<sup>53</sup> The fifth workshop (2024) discussed the draft UNCTAD recommendation on general product safety principles and the guidance on international cooperation, with ideas proposed on how to fashion international cooperation for product safety as a reality for all consumers worldwide and views shared of the necessary international institutional arrangements.<sup>54</sup>

#### 5. Consumer associations

38. Consumer associations have a critical role in making the voices of consumers heard in public policy decision-making and improving consumer information and education. UNCTAD has collaborated with Consumers International on strengthening consumer protection frameworks, co-organizing several webinars on using standards as a tool in consumer protection (2020) and on trust in cross-border e-commerce, focused on consumer product safety and data-sharing in online markets (2022).<sup>55</sup> Under the presidency of India of the Group of 20, UNCTAD organized a webinar with Consumers International and Consumer Unity and Trust Society International on fair trade practices for fostering equitable and sustainable global economies (2023).<sup>56</sup> At the Consumers International

<sup>49</sup> See <https://www.oneplanetnetwork.org/programmes/consumer-information-scp>.

<sup>50</sup> See <https://unctad.org/meeting/joint-ec-unctad-workshop-kick-starting-consumer-product-safety-worthy-endeavour>.

<sup>51</sup> TD/RBP/CONF.9/9. See <https://unctad.org/meeting/joint-ec-unctad-workshop-building-effective-consumer-product-safety-frameworks-together>.

<sup>52</sup> See <https://unctad.org/meeting/european-commission-unctad-workshop-civil-society-and-consumer-product-safety>.

<sup>53</sup> See <https://unctad.org/meeting/european-commission-unctad-workshop-unlocking-full-potential-research-product-safety>.

<sup>54</sup> See <https://unctad.org/meeting/unctad-european-commission-workshop-recommendation-general-product-safety-principles-0>.

<sup>55</sup> See <https://unctad.org/meeting/unctad-iso-copolco-consumers-international-joint-webinar-using-standards-tool-consumer> and <https://unctad.org/meeting/trust-cross-border-e-commerce-case-consumer-product-safety>.

<sup>56</sup> See <https://unctad.org/meeting/cuts-global-webinar-g20-championing-consumer-movement>.

Global Congress (2023), UNCTAD hosted a side event on how Governments could empower consumer associations, featuring insights from civil society representatives from Chile, Nigeria, Rwanda and representatives from African Women Agribusiness Network.<sup>57</sup>

## 6. Competition law and policy

39. In 2020, UNCTAD, in collaboration with the Competition Authority of Türkiye, during the Istanbul Competition Forum, organized three events for the authorities of neighbouring countries, gathering competition officials, practitioners and academics to discuss digital platforms, cross-border cases and the impact of the pandemic on competition law and policy.

40. Since 2021, under a 2019 agreement with the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies of the European University Institute, UNCTAD, with the Florence Competition School, Italy, has offered free access to developing country experts to specialized competition courses. To date, 37 participants have benefited from training opportunities.

## III. Voluntary peer reviews in 2020–2024

41. UNCTAD launched the voluntary peer reviews of competition law and policy at the Fifth United Nations Conference to Review All Aspects of the Set; UNCTAD is the only international organization conducting this exercise.<sup>58</sup> As at January 2025, 30 jurisdictions have undergone peer reviews of competition law and policy, including two reviews of WAEMU, one tripartite review of the United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe and one bipartite review of Fiji and Papua New Guinea; and six jurisdictions have undergone peer reviews of consumer protection law and policy.

### A. Competition law and policy

42. In 2020, the second peer review was conducted of WAEMU, following the first review in 2007, making it the only regional organization to request a second review.<sup>59</sup> The review included an assessment of progress achieved after 12 years, highlighted efforts by the WAEMU Commission to enhance the enforcement of competition law and identified challenges stemming from the centralization of enforcement at the regional level, which had undermined the effectiveness of national competition authorities. Recommendations on institutional and legal reforms were aimed at strengthening the competition regime and improving collaboration with the Economic Community of West African States, since many WAEMU member States also belong to this broader community. In 2021, a dissemination workshop brought together stakeholders to identify a road map for implementing the recommendations, aimed at strengthening competition policy across the region.<sup>60</sup>

43. In 2021, the peer review of Malawi included recommendations on enhancing the competition framework, including increasing budgetary resources, amending the competition law to provide clearer definitions of violations, undertaking capacity-building initiatives and placing competition and regulatory authorities under one central ministry, to address competing and conflicting policy objectives and to better align with COMESA.<sup>61</sup> In 2022, a dissemination event helped to raise awareness among national authorities of the positive impact of the recommendations.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>57</sup> See <https://unctad.org/meeting/consumers-international-global-congress-unctad-side-event-enhancing-consumer-movement>.

<sup>58</sup> TD/RBP/CONF.6/15.

<sup>59</sup> TD/RBP/CONF.9/8.

<sup>60</sup> See <https://unctad.org/meeting/atelier-regional-de-dissemination-des-resultats-de-levaluation-ex-post-de-la-politique>.

<sup>61</sup> TD/B/C.I/CLP/59.

<sup>62</sup> See <https://unctad.org/meeting/dissemination-voluntary-peer-review-competition-law-and-policy-malawi-and-follow-technical>.

44. In 2022, the peer review of Bangladesh included recommendations on strengthening the competition framework; amending the competition law to ensure sufficient resource allocation and operational independence; and ensuring staff training in international best practices, particularly in strategy-setting and activity prioritization. Market definition; market share considerations in determining infringements; independence and accountability; and merger notification criteria were also discussed.<sup>63</sup> In 2024, a dissemination event, organized with the Bangladesh Competition Commission and the Commonwealth Secretariat, addressed the recommendations and explored collaborative efforts for their implementation, and was followed by a capacity-building workshop for new staff on competition and case analysis.<sup>64</sup>

45. In 2023, the peer review of Paraguay included recommendations on amendments, including introducing a per se rule for hardcore cartels, removing consciously parallel practices from the list of prohibited agreements, explicitly defining the list of abusive conduct as indicative rather than restrictive and incorporating a leniency programme for companies cooperating in investigations, as well as recommendations on establishing a sectoral regulator for electricity and disqualifying participants involved in collusive conduct from public procurement processes.<sup>65</sup>

46. In 2024, the peer review of Egypt included recommendations on clearly distinguishing between agreements that were anticompetitive per se and other types of agreements, granting exclusive jurisdiction to enforce competition law across all sectors and enhancing cooperation between the competition authority and sectoral regulators, as well as recommendations on a new methodology for fines, increasing fine amounts, granting the authority greater discretion, empowering the board to impose administrative monetary sanctions and strengthening the independence of the authority.<sup>66</sup> In 2024, UNCTAD and the Competition Authority held a dissemination event to raise awareness among key policymakers and government officials of the potential impact of the recommendations, followed by a training course for judges.

## **B. Consumer protection law and policy**

47. In 2020, the peer review of Peru recognized the strong legislative and public policy framework and the effective enforcement led by the National Institute for the Defence of Competition and Protection of Intellectual Property, with a key role in inter-institutional coordination.<sup>67</sup> Recommendations included orienting consumer policy instruments towards vulnerable and disadvantaged consumers, developing a targeted action plan for the digital economy, enhancing consumer redress mechanisms and strengthening consumer product safety networks, along with international and cross-border enforcement cooperation. In 2023, UNCTAD and the National Institute hosted a public event in Lima, to share the recommendations and increase the awareness of the National Consumer Protection Council of their positive impact.<sup>68</sup>

48. In 2021, the peer review of Chile included recommendations on improving online dispute resolution mechanisms, particularly in e-commerce; incorporating consumer interests into public policy design; and enhancing coordination with consumer associations.<sup>69</sup> The review emphasized the importance of protecting consumer rights at the constitutional level, providing better training for judges and strengthening institutions involved in consumer protection. In 2022, a dissemination event engaged government

<sup>63</sup> TD/B/C.I/CLP/64.

<sup>64</sup> See <https://unctad.org/meeting/discussions-unctad-peer-review-competition-law-and-policy-bangladesh>.

<sup>65</sup> TD/B/C.I/CLP/70.

<sup>66</sup> TD/B/C.I/CLP/75.

<sup>67</sup> TD/RBP/CONF.9/7.

<sup>68</sup> See <https://unctad.org/meeting/dissemination-unctads-voluntary-peer-review-consumer-protection-law-and-policy-peru>.

<sup>69</sup> TD/B/C.I/CPLP/24.

officials, consumer and business associations and the media, as well as peer reviewers who offered national insights.<sup>70</sup> In Chile, UNCTAD delivered advisory services twice.

49. In 2022, the peer review of Thailand noted the well-established legislative and institutional framework involving multiple authorities.<sup>71</sup> The report focused on existing alternative and online dispute resolution mechanisms; recommendations included unifying the definition of “consumer” across different bodies; addressing the needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups; adapting laws and policies to e-commerce challenges; decentralization to rural areas; and improving the consumer dispute resolution system by enhancing coordination, standardizing procedures, providing training and audits and offering clearer guidance for consumers. In 2023, a dissemination event was held during National Consumer Protection Day, at which peer reviewers offered national insights.

50. In 2023, the peer review of Gabon emphasized the importance of developing a national vision for a consumer protection policy and fostering cooperation with other independent and autonomous executive authorities; and underscored that a robust consumer protection framework required both preventive measures and the establishment of effective enforcement and remedy mechanisms, to ensure comprehensive consumer protection.<sup>72</sup> In 2024, a dissemination event was held in Libreville.<sup>73</sup>

51. In 2024, UNCTAD undertook an implementation assessment (box 3).

#### Box 3

##### **Peer review recommendations: Impact assessment of implementation**

UNCTAD is the first and only international organization to facilitate voluntary peer reviews of consumer protection law and policy. In 2024, UNCTAD assessed the implementation of peer review recommendations in five of the six reviewed countries, namely, Morocco (2018), Indonesia (2019), Peru (2020), Chile (2021) and Thailand (2022).

The assessment showed that the reviews had led to significant improvements in legal, public policy-related and institutional frameworks, with 53 per cent of legal and policy-related recommendations and 66 per cent of institutional recommendations implemented. Despite challenges such as budget constraints and complex legal reforms, the peer review methodology had proven adaptable to countries at different stages of consumer protection-related development, raising awareness among stakeholders and strengthening international cooperation. Follow-up technical assistance was instrumental in supporting implementation, with countries such as Indonesia and Thailand reporting higher adoption rates where additional support had been provided.

Following the peer reviews, consumer protection agencies have engaged in advocacy efforts with decision makers to ensure that recommendations on legislative, public policy-related and institutional frameworks are considered and acted upon. However, financial constraints remain a significant barrier in many countries to implementing the remaining recommendations.

*Source:* TD/B/C.I/CPLP/40.

<sup>70</sup> See <https://unctad.org/meeting/dissemination-unctads-voluntary-peer-review-consumer-protection-law-and-policy-chile>.

<sup>71</sup> TD/B/C.I/CPLP/30.

<sup>72</sup> TD/B/C.I/CPLP/35.

<sup>73</sup> See <https://unctad.org/meeting/dissemination-unctads-voluntary-peer-review-consumer-protection-law-and-policy-gabon>.

## IV. Topics for consideration

52. Delegates at the Ninth United Nations Conference to Review All Aspects of the Set may wish to reflect on possible topics in the area of capacity-building in and technical assistance on consumer protection and competition law and policy that UNCTAD should focus on over the next five years. Member States may wish to consider the following:

(a) UNCTAD will continue to support developing countries, particularly the least developed countries, in adopting, revising and implementing competition and consumer protection frameworks, as many may still lack such regimes or have not been able to apply them effectively. Strengthening such frameworks is key in fostering fair and competitive markets, protecting consumers and promoting economic development. To facilitate the process, a comprehensive set of products could be developed, to guide new competition and consumer protection authorities in policy design and implementation, as well as law enforcement, focused on the prioritization of activities; the best available tools and initiatives, including soft law instruments and market studies; and collaboration mechanisms with sectoral regulators and other agencies. Such products could provide strategies for stakeholder engagement and awareness-raising and for meaningful interactions with businesses, consumer associations, non-governmental organizations, the judiciary and academia, as well as effective communications with the media and the public;

(b) Accompanying new institutions in the first steps is key in ensuring success. Beyond providing guidance, such support could build on the long-standing and diverse technical cooperation experience of UNCTAD and include practical support for the development and strengthening of the capacities of new authorities and the necessary instruments. A key component of such efforts is capacity-building activities, to adequately address emerging challenges due to the digital economy and the evolving global context. The success of training courses on key topics of interest to authorities and/or addressed to certain groups of stakeholders, and held online, suggests that other such courses could be developed and made available throughout the year;

(c) UNCTAD will continue to promote more effective regional cooperation, assisting competition and consumer protection networks in Africa, Asia and Latin America, namely with regard to cross-border cases. UNCTAD is well-placed to “network the networks” and has provided extensive technical assistance services to regional economic organizations and regional networks, supporting interactions between them, to help improve international cooperation with regard to competition and consumer protection.

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