UNCTAD 16 GENEVA

20–23 OCTOBER 2025

Agenda item: 7

General Debate

Statement by:

Consumers International

UN trade & development

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, colleagues,

Consumers International represents 200 consumer advocacy organisations in more than 100 countries. Every day, our members help consumers navigate an increasingly complex marketplace – one where the boundaries between digital and physical products are blurred, and where rapid innovation is redefining what it means to be a consumer. Consumers advocates are there to support people: when a digital payment fails, a scam occurs, or a product is unsafe.

The mission of Consumers International is simple: to make markets fair, safe and sustainable. And at UNCTAD16, that mission feels closer than ever to the heart of the global agenda — because *resilience, inclusion,* and *sustainability* are not abstract principles. They are fundamentally tied to the consumer experience.

For more than 60 years, Consumers International has supported multilateral institutions and key stakeholders in the marketplace in responding to the challenges of today, while building understanding of and preparing for the consumer issues of the future. From shaping and revising the UN Guidelines for Consumer Protection and the G20/OECD Principles on Financial Consumer Protection, to building the knowledge and capacity of consumer advocates to engage with regulators on various issues.

During this week's Conference, our delegation has heard several messages clearly.

First, trust is the currency of digital markets.
Around the world, consumer organisations are confronting an erosion of people's trust in digital environments — driven by scams, data breaches, and systems that leave people without redress.

Voluntary responses are not sufficient. Governments must take the lead in coordinating responses and setting clear, enforceable rules.

Second, resilience depends on inclusion.
Even in the most connected economies, divides in access remain. At the same time, growing digital dependency means that a single infrastructure failure can paralyse millions.

The future consumer will not only need protection from individual harm, but from systemic failure — and that requires consumer protection authorities, business and civil society to act together.

Third, the next mandate must focus on consistency and coordination.
Fragmented, reactive regulation cannot keep pace with the digital economy. From verifying what is safe and genuine online, to the need for clear, harmonised standards so consumers can trust what they buy, consumers need technology that is empowering and explainable; redress that is fast, fair and accessible; enforcement that travels across borders; and markets where competition, data protection and consumer protection reinforce each other.

For this to become a reality, we as consumers advocates can be partners in shaping the next phase of global consumer policy and development. Not only watchdogs, but guide dogs.

When consumers are protected, informed and empowered, markets thrive and individual and societal resilience becomes reality. Thank you.