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Business sector engagement and Consumer Awareness

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Key points

1. Consumer Protection and UNCTAD's mandate
2. The importance of Business engagement and the UNGCP
3. Consumer awareness and information
4. Sustainable products and Consumers Health and Safety
5. Final remarks

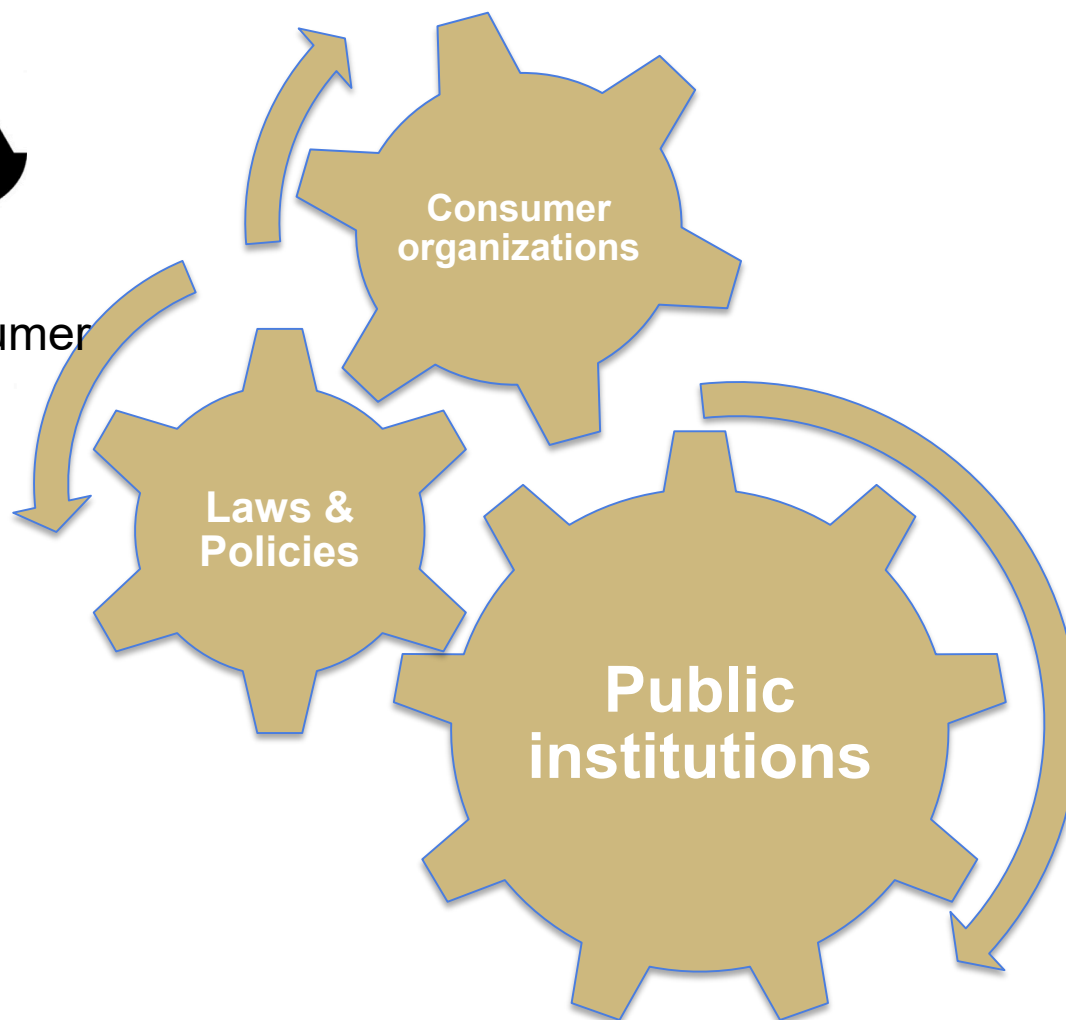


Why does Consumer Protection matter?

- Ensures access to non-hazardous products, enables informed consumers' choice,
- Prevents unfair commercial practices, provides dispute resolution and redress.
- Empowered consumers play an active role in the market and contribute for sustainable economic development.



Consumer protection



The UNGCP and the SDGs

General Assembly resolution 70/186 of 22 December 2015:

- ◆ Approved the revised UN Guidelines for Consumer Protection (1985, amended in 1999), that were expanded and modernized to respond to current challenges;
- ◆ Created the IGE on Consumer Protection law and policy, providing a unique international forum for intergovernmental deliberations in this field;
- ◆ Conferred UNCTAD a new mandate that is closely linked to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 12/ 16 / 17).



UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT

UNCTAD



UN Guidelines for Consumer Protection

- ✓ **Definition:** First time in an international instrument;
- ✓ **Good business practices:** first time recommendations aim at the private sector, recognizing shared responsibility;
- ✓ **National policies for Consumer Protection:** checklist of adequate legal and institutional landscape;
- ✓ **Dispute resolution and redress:** inclusion of ADR (alternative dispute resolution), collective redress, and compensation for consumers;
- ✓ **E-commerce:** new guidelines;
- ✓ **Financial Services:** inspired in OECD/G20 High Level Principles;
- ✓ **Energy, Public services, Tourism:** new emerging issues;
- ✓ **International cooperation:** especially important for cross border cases.



UN Guidelines for Consumer Protection



Business engagement and the UNGCP

- Key issue: Consumers health and safety is also related to sustainability. Businesses play a major role in adapting production, marketing and sales to new times and needs.
- G. 11 - Business are encouraged to *"provide complete, accurate and not misleading information" (...) "develop programmes and mechanisms to assist consumers to develop knowledge (...) to take informed decisions"*.
- G. 29 - *Consumer access to accurate information about the environmental impact of products and services should be encouraged through such means as product profiles, environmental reports by industry, information centres for consumers, voluntary and transparent labelling programmes and product information hotlines.*

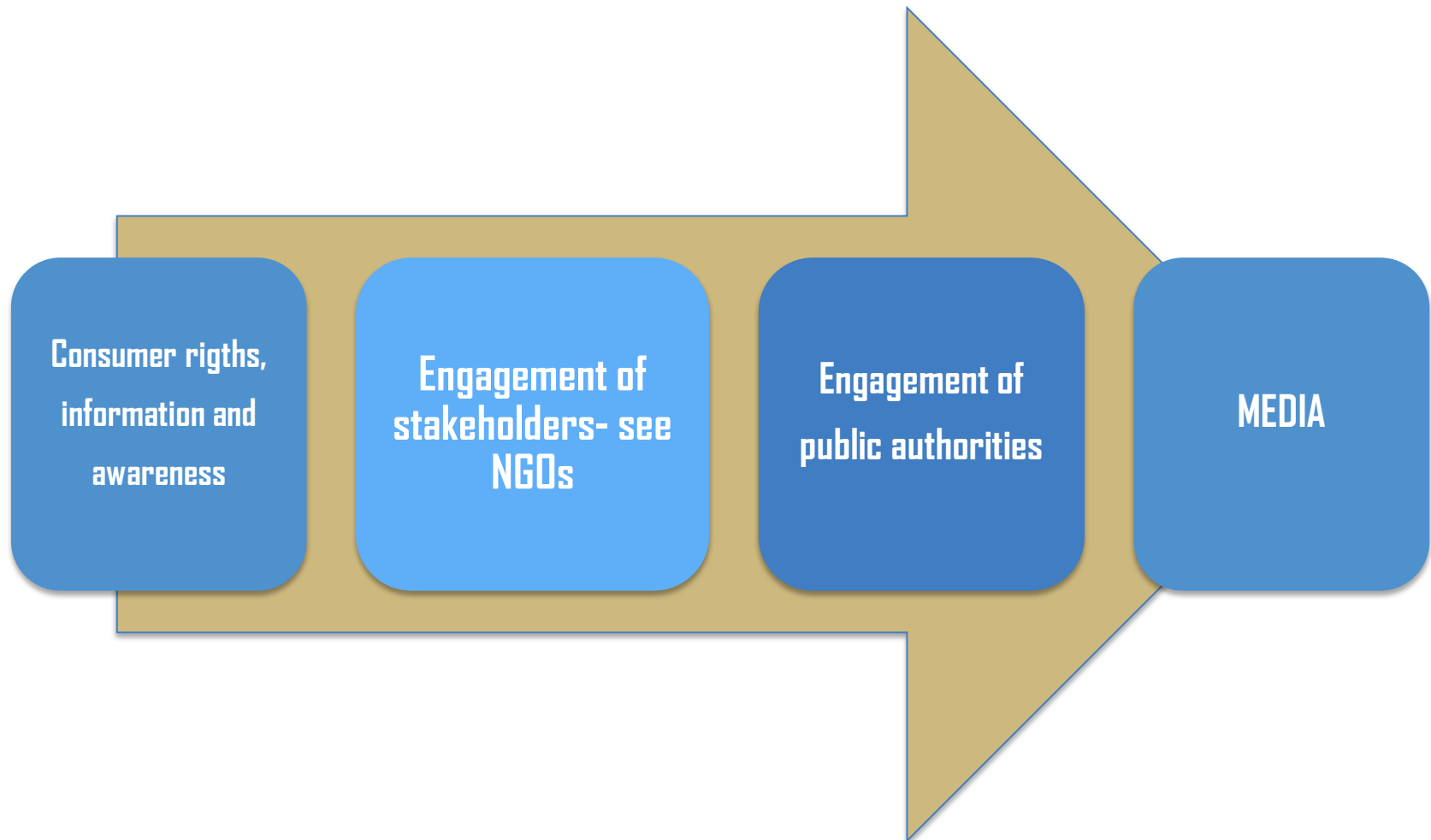


Business engagement and the UNGCP

- *G. 46 Business should, where appropriate, undertake or participate in factual and relevant consumer education and information programmes.*
- *G. 50 Responsibility for sustainable consumption is shared by all members and organizations of society, with informed consumers, Member States, businesses, labour organizations and consumer and environmental organizations playing particularly important roles.*
- *G. 92 To promote sustainable consumption, Member States, international bodies and businesses should work together to develop, transfer and disseminate environmentally sound technologies.*



Consumer awareness and information



Consumer awareness and information

Consumers have the right to access safe products and services.

G. 28 Member States should encourage all concerned to participate in the free flow of accurate information on all aspects of consumer products;

G. 29 Consumer access to accurate information about the environmental impact of products and services should be encouraged through such means as product profiles, environmental reports by industry, information centres for consumers, voluntary and transparent eco-labeling programmes and product information hotlines.

Consumers shall be protected from misleading environmental claims and international double standard practices.



Consumer awareness and information

G. 44. Consumer education shall cover, for instance, health, product hazards, product labelling and environmental protection

G. 50 Informed consumers have an essential role in promoting consumption that is environmentally, economically and socially sustainable, including through the effects of their choices on producers.

G. 51 Member States together with businesses and the civil society should develop and implement strategies to promote sustainable consumption through policies that include regulations, economic and social instruments to raise awareness of the impact of consumption patterns.

Consumers have the right and the interest to be informed about products and services, its risks, quality, quantity, technical details and, of course, its sustainability patterns.

Duly informed consumers trust businesses, which has a positive impact in the market.



Sustainable products and Consumer Health and Safety

H. Promotion of sustainable consumption (G. 49 – 62)

Member States are encouraged to safely manage environmentally harmful uses of substances and encourage the development of environmentally sound alternatives. Potentially hazardous substances should be evaluated on a scientific basis

It is important to promote awareness of the health-related benefits of sustainable consumption, considering direct effects on individual and collective health

In order to achieve sustainable patterns the partnership of the public and the private sectors is crucial.

Regulation and economic instruments (fiscal) are relevant tools to achieve the SDGs



Final remarks

- Consumer information, awareness and transparency ensure access to non-hazardous products, enabling informed consumers' choices: the promotion and access to sustainable products can be therefore encouraged.
- Empowered consumers play an active role in the market and contribute for sustainable economic development.
- Business also play a major role, having the responsibility for promoting sustainable consumption through the design, production and distribution of goods and services (UNGCP Gd. n. 50).
- Standards and Self-regulation initiatives are an important avenue to reinforce Consumer Protection and promote Sustainable Consumption.
- International Cooperation can disseminate environmentally sound technologies, provide developing countries assistance, facilitate capacity building and foster joint work towards the achievement of the SDGs



THANK YOU

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<http://unctad.org/en/Pages/DITC/CompetitionLaw/Competition-Law-and-Policy.aspx>



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