



Consumer Affairs Agency  
Government of Japan



*Tokushima Prefectural  
Government*

## *G20 INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CONSUMER POLICY*

- The role of Consumer Protection Agencies in attaining the Sustainable Development Goals -

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# AGENDA 2030



*Agreed in 2015, the agenda mobilize efforts of all countries to end all forms of poverty, fight inequalities and tackle climate change, while ensuring that no one is left behind.*

People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace, Partnership

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# CONSUMER PROTECTION AS A TOOL FOR ACHIEVING THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



- Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth - *Building productive capacity creates decent jobs and fosters sustainable growth.*
- Goal 10: Reduced inequalities - *Shared prosperity for all will require reduced inequalities and improved international economic governance.*
- Goal 12: Responsible Consumption and Production - *Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns*
- Goal 17: Partnerships for the Goals - *A strengthened and revitalised global partnership.*



# Focus on Sustainable Consumption and Production



"Sustainable Consumption includes meeting the needs of present and future generations for goods and services in ways that are economically, socially and environmentally sustainable", United Nations Guidelines for Consumer Protection

- Doing more and better with less;
- Manage resources efficiently (lifecycle thinking);
- Reduce resource use, environmental degradation, waste and pollution along the whole life cycle, while increasing quality of life;
- Size opportunities for developing countries - "leapfrogging"



United Nations Environment Programme, Sustainable Consumption and Production, a Handbook for Policymakers, 2015

# UN Guidelines for Consumer Protection

Adopted in 1985, amended in 1999, latest revision in 2015, approved by the UN General Assembly resolution 70/186, 22 December 2015



## Some new recommendations:

- ✓ **National policies for Consumer Protection:** checklist of adequate legal and institutional landscape;
- ✓ **Dispute resolution and redress:** alternative dispute resolution, collective redress, compensation for consumers;
- ✓ **E-commerce:** new guidelines;
- ✓ **Financial Services:** ref. to OECD/G20 High-Level Principles;
- ✓ **Good business practices:** for the first time aiming at the private sector, recognizing shared responsibility;
- ✓ **International cooperation:** especially important for cross border cases.

# UN Guidelines for Consumer Protection (2)

## Section H - Sustainable Consumption, guidelines 49-62

### Main points:

- ✓ Shared responsibility: **member States; businesses; consumer associations; environmental organizations.** Consumers need to be informed;
- ✓ Policy-making in partnership with **all relevant stakeholders;**
- ✓ Mixed instruments and tools **are welcomed:** regulatory mechanisms, standards, business initiatives;
- ✓ Research, methodologies and data are necessary to **support planning and monitoring;**
- ✓ **Business encouragement** towards new sound products and services as new technologies;
- ✓ Governments and international organizations **should lead** examples of sustainable practices in procurement.



# Scope of action and key actors

Sustainability is a cross-cutting issue: a shift towards more sustainable lifestyle requires public policy measures (combining tools and instrument) aiming at consumers and at business to adjust production and distribution methods.

**Consumer goods - food, clothing, electronics - and essential public services - energy, water, waste and transport - represent sectors of high impact**

## Consumer policy measures

- **Information and education campaigns:** to raise awareness and to provide skills - examples: fight against food waste; energy efficiency (renewable sources such as solar; replacement of light bulbs; eco-labels for electronic goods); recycling;
- **Advertising framework adjustment to environmental claims;**
- **Engagement with relevant stakeholders -** business and consumer associations;
- **Encouragement of business self-regulatory initiatives;**
- **Behavioural insights** to better understand consumer behavior and attitudes and support policy measures.

## Economic policy measures



- Promoting resource efficiency (subsidies/tax incentives)
- Regulation of lifespan expectancy of consumer products and product obsolescence
- Eco labelling (product information)
- Use of international standards
- Framework of collaborative economy models

## Role of Consumer Protection Agencies

The Four-E approach is fostering sustainable consumer behavior (UK Sustainable Development Research Network, SDC 2010)

**Enable** access to sustainable choice: education, skills, information;

**Encourage** people through incentives to sustainable choice and taxes on unsustainable options;

**Engage** people in the process of change (public consultations for inputs on policy design);

**Exemplify** with Government policies and practices (public procurement; training of civil servants).

## Role of Consumer Protection Agencies (2)

Consumer Protection Agencies inform, educate and empower consumers for informed, sustainable and responsible choice.

**Vulnerable** and specific **consumers' groups**:

- **children and young persons** (more receptive and embracing access/use of goods and services rather than ownership);
- **women** (receptive and usually responsible for the main households' consumption decisions);
- **the elderly**;
- **low-income consumers**;
- **immigrants**,

need special attention, as some can be the drivers of change (children and youngsters; women) while others may require additional support.



## Role of Consumer Protection Agencies (3)

### Dialogue with **business** representatives

- to raise awareness to consumer concerns and needs;
- to inform and educate through guidance instruments (example: environmental advertising claims);
- to encourage self-regulation initiatives that complement and strengthen consumer protection at sector level;
- to hear from experts on new production patterns and new business models and gather technical product information.



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# Consumer Protection Agencies in regards the Sustainable Development Goals

- ❖ Consumer protection impacts the three dimensions of sustainable development: (i) economic, as consumption accounts for 60% of global GDP; (ii) social, for it protects individuals in a disadvantageous position in the marketplace vis-à-vis traders; and (iii) environmental, for consumer choices bear a direct impact on the environment.
- ❖ **Consumer policy's focus on consumers and its broad scope** (all consumer goods - food and non-food - and services) has a direct link to most Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially those related to People and Planet;
- ❖ **Indispensable coordination and cooperation with other public bodies** (at local and regional levels) and sector-specific regulators provide an extensive and detailed view of market functioning;
- ❖ **Multi-stakeholder approach** and close interaction with consumer groups, other NGOs and business organizations are at the core of Consumer Protection Agencies' work, illustrating concrete partnerships, crucial to achieve the SDGs.



# Sustainable Development Goal 10



Consumer protection seeks to ensure fair treatment for all people in the marketplace, thereby contributing to greater equality and eliminating discriminatory practices through the adoption of appropriate legislation and policies within and among countries.

In its [resolution 39/248 on Consumer Protection of 16 April 1985](#),<sup>[1]</sup> the General Assembly recognized “that consumers often face imbalances in economic terms, educational levels, and bargaining power,” and further recognized “consumers’ right to access just, equitable and sustainable economic and social development.”

[Resolution 70/186 on Consumer Protection of 22 December 2015](#),<sup>[2]</sup> states “that a robust legal and regulatory framework for consumer protection, including effective dispute resolution and redress mechanisms and the ability of consumer protection enforcement authorities to cooperate in obtaining redress,... serves an important public interest, contributing to economic dynamism and consumer welfare”.

The achievement of SDG 10 requires consumers to access essential goods and services, to know their rights in the marketplace and to be able to enforce them.

<sup>[1]</sup> A/RES/29/248

<sup>[2]</sup> A/RES/70/186



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# The role of UNCTAD and other international organizations and stakeholders

- Cooperation, exchange of information, joint work: explore synergies for sounder and more comprehensive outcomes and avoid duplication of efforts;
- Dissemination of relevant information and best practices;
- Development of knowledge and data (indicators) to monitor progress and adjust strategies.





# THANK YOU!

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