



Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Consumer Protection Law and Policy
6th Session, 18 – 19 July 2022, Geneva, Switzerland and online

Roundtable on:
Consumer protection in the provision of health services
Monday, 18 July 2022 (11:15 - 13:00)
Palais des Nations, Room XVII (First Floor) and online

Within social protection policy systems, consumer protection bears relevance for basic health services based on three benchmarks: availability (quality and product), accessibility and affordability of healthcare in relation to relationships between health service providers and patients, area of healthcare products and management of healthcare facilities. Access and delivery of basic health services via digital means pose several challenges and questions which call in consumer policies, among other related areas such as data privacy, intellectual property and competition.

The COVID-19 health crisis transitioned into a consumer crisis. Access to health services has been enhanced during the pandemic via eHealth. Consumer protection can play an important role in upholding consumer rights through regulation of unfair business practices. The pandemic posed challenges on social protection in a large scale and at the same time created an avenue for consumer protection agencies to address practices such as price gouging or false claims, linking the health provision aspect and consumer protection policies.

The pandemic has exhibited a three-fold impact where a severe health shock has led to domestic containment measures with serious economic and social impacts. The local economic fallout, combined with a subsequent slowdown in the global economy are having significant social consequences across the globe that are, in turn, becoming increasingly likely to be felt for years, and generations to come.

At its eighteenth session, the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Competition Law and Policy discussed Competition in healthcare markets: access and affordability. The focus on health was already increasing in UNCTAD's consumer protection work before the COVID-19 crisis. As part of the United Nations COVID-19 Response, UNCTAD engaged with member States on strengthening consumer protection in the provision of health services (including e-health) in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic with specific recommendations which relate to: integration of informal sectors, identity and eligibility, eHealth, financing, and affordability and comprehensive protection in health. These recommendations contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 3.8 and are aligned with the United Nations guidelines for consumer protection.

Their relevance will be discussed with member States and other stakeholders at this session. This round table discussions will focus on three recommendations out of the five listed above: (i) financing and affordability; (ii) eHealth; and (iii) comprehensive protection in health.

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WORK PROGRAMME

11:15 - 11:25 **Presentation by UNCTAD**

11:25 - 12:00 **Speakers**

- Ms. Ruth Castello, Undersecretary, Consumer Protection Group, Department of Trade and Industry, Philippines
- Dr. Adamou Moustapha, Director General for the Promotion of Health, Ministry of Public Health, Population and Social Affairs, Niger

12:00 - 13:00 **Interactive debate**

Delegates wishing to speak during the session are invited to inform the UNCTAD secretariat accordingly by contacting Ms. Elizabeth Gachuri (elizabeth.gachuri@un.org).